Time is precious. We can't get it back. To make the choices to pick up your broken pieces, you have to want change. If you don't want it, if you don't desire anything more than what you emotionally have right now, things won't get better, and you won't move forward.

check out the rest of Jermemy Towner's BWO piece on page 49

EDITOR'S NOTE VOLUME 11.45

Hey Beat readers, this week we asked our ed note writer and ol' colleague Mervyn Wool to touch on this week's Beat topic that was addressed in our workshop, "Recipe For Success." You couldn't ask for a better contributor than this thoughtful and committed writer. For your information we met Mervyn many years ago when he was fighting for his life in the max unit in San Francisco's Youth Guidance Center. Back in the day he used the penname Pure Dragon. Anyhow, as Pure Dragon, he took us on a journey each week through his thoughtful storytelling and commentaries, to teaching us readers about the life he lead and what it was he was after, a chance to be free again and to legitly succeed! Well, upon leaving SF/YGC Mervyn was sentenced to the CYA where he continued to touch us each week with thoughtful letters and contributions for The Beat readers. Back in the day, every serious Beat reader knew, or thought they knew Pure Dragon. We would go into various juvenile halls and have writers from all backgrounds ask us, "have you heard from Pure Dragon?" "Did Pure Dragon write this week?"

Several years later, upon his parole, the day of his release from CYA in 2002, Mervyn called The Beat Within minutes after he walked out of the gates of CYA a free man from the local fast food chain "Jack In The Box" about a job and from that day forward he has been an office colleague on a mission to succeed and that he has and continues to do each day! Lets now give the floor to Merv. Merv!

The topic I want to touch on today is "My recipe for success." I can't really say I am successful. However, I can truly say I have succeeded in some parts of my life. I have reached goals I have set for myself, and the life I am living right now, I can't complain. I remember I used to always imagine the day that I will be out — first from SF YGC unit B5, then all the way to Sacramento, then to Ione, and then my final stop at Stockton. I know we all have had those times, times where we just imagine ourselves being out, being free and doing the things we want to do today.

Well, today, I want to share with you my recipe for success — a recipe I have put together from the start of YGC to this very day. And as I go along, I will explain each ingredient and why it's important to me or might be important to you.

The first of all ingredients is support. While I was in the halls, support was very limited for most, as many of you might know. Some of us don't even get visits from our family members, while others have limited visits because parents have to work. While I was in there, my mother supported me all the way. She would come visit me whenever she could. And my dad... well, every time he came to see me, the visit almost always ended with me yelling at him and walking back to my room. Regardless of this, he still came at least once a week on weekends to bring me junk food because my mother had to work.

I know a lot of y'all out there don't have the luxury of loved ones visiting you wherever you are at, but that doesn't mean you can't find support elsewhere. I even had support from some of the staff in the units. And of course, I can't leave out all the support I got from The Beat. Support from friends and family is important. That's one of the things that kept me going because with the support I got, I didn't want to let anyone down, especially myself.

The next ingredient is writing. Some of you might be thinking, "What does this guy mean by writing?" Well, this is what I mean. Writing helped me express all the feelings I had bottled inside me, things and thoughts that I kept to myself. Writing also set me free mentally when I was in that little room facing four white walls. Writing took me to another world, a world where I can escape reality. I know many of you will agree with me that is one of many reasons why we write, right, to set ourselves free of all worries, stress, pain, and hatred. And also to share with others and teach others the things we know. I honestly don't believe there is such a person out there that is so smart that there is nothing more he/she can learn. No matter how smart or how many things we know, there is always something new to learn about. Life, itself, is a learning experience, y'all agree?

Determination. Determination is also a very important part of this recipe. Without it, the recipe won't be complete. Throughout the whole time I was locked up, I kept telling myself that once I get out, I will never come back to the halls again. I did go back though, but not for another charge or for breaking the law. I went back to the hall(s) for Beat workshops. It wasn't easy, and it never will. But if you have determination, and you walk around with determination, you can do anything you want. I am determined to be a successful person, like I was determined to graduate from college — and I did. I believe without determination and a set mind, a person will not succeed in life.

Motivation. Everyone needs a little motivation. And what motivates me is money and life itself. I work hard to earn what I want, and I strive for a better life. Money, I believe, motivates everyone. Money makes the world go round and round. However, some people take this motivation or their striving for money by going to the fast lane. As for me, I'd love to make money left and right, but I've had enough of the nightlife. I have had enough of worrying about police (even though I still have to watch out for the police because when I'm driving I tend to speed a lot...) or worrying about the next man hating on me. I am taking it slow now. I am making money the slow and safe way. I might not be making much, but I am making it in a way that I know I deserve what I earn, what I worked hard for. I know that I'm not destroying anyone's life while I am at it.

Now this next ingredient — education — is something everyone should already have, and keep adding to. It's just that some of you are not using what you've already got. And when I say education, I am not only talking about school education. A lot of us have street education and that can be applied to anything you do or any job you get. But school education is important because nowadays, a lot of people look at what you're carrying on your belt hoping to find either an AA, a BA, an MA, or a PhD. I didn't realize how important education is until I realized that an average high school graduate with no college degree can make about $20,000 a year, and one with an AA (a two-year college degree) make between 20–30 thousand a year. I don't know about y'all, but I am trying to climb up that high hill, even though I'm making that climb one step at a time.

I know I might be leaving one or two ingredients out, but I really can't think of any right now, and I know I these have been the major ingredients in my recipe for success. Even though this is my recipe for success, so far I am not yet a success. However, I have succeeded in what I have set for myself. I am still a long way to being the success I want to be, but just moving forward toward those goals — in freedom — makes me feel like a success.

Nice. It's an honor to be apart of this journey with Merv, and we also hope to be a part of the future successes that you readers embark on today, tomorrow, or, in the future!

Now lets move right along to the topics that were addressed prior to the writing that is featured in this editorial note.

OUR first topic, The Lent – What have you lent that you wish you had never lent, because one, it never was returned, two, it came back broken, or three it came back when you no longer cared about it? Over the years all of us have obtained plenty of wonderful, personal, and touching things that we love and cherish, and never in our wildest dreams ever thought of lending "it" away to a friend, let alone a stranger, or a family member, but we did. What to this day still bugs you when you think about what it is you gave away- why did you give it away? Were you talked into it? Were you not in your right mind? Or were you simply being kind, thinking nothing of it, until it was too late? So, tell us your "lent-away story," and how did this experience change you and your relationships. (Are you lending part of your life and freedom to the system and/or the 'hood right now? How will you claim it back?)

And the second topic, Menace To Society —This is a term we read all the time in The Beat. Many of you write how angry it makes you when you hear yourself described as a "Menace to Society." Others sometimes describe themselves with the same phrase, and often with a certain amount of pride or boasting. So, what we want to know is what does the term "Menace to Society" means to you? Do you fit your own description of a "Menace to Society?" Do you think the Police, POs, DAs, and Judges use that phrase too often without giving any clear sense of what they mean? Who falls within your definition of "Menace to Society?" Do you sometimes think that the very people who are putting that label on you are the real menaces to society? In what ways? So tell us what "Menace to Society" means to you, and whether you consider yourself — or others — to qualify for the label.

And last but definitely not least, I Write Because...

Do not forget, our latest editorial commentary, we hope you now will consider writing in our (the 16th) editorial note writing contest. The contest question to consider writing on is, "A Letter To The President." For this contest we want you serious writers to write a letter to President Bush! It is our goal to not only post these letters in The Beat Within publication and our website, but to send them off to the White House, too! Now, do we need to suggest topics on what to talk about? Doubt it. So with this said, our contest question is all about you writing a letter to President Bush. (Don't write anything that will get you in trouble with the Office of Homeland Security...)

The contest submission deadline was Election Day, Tuesday, November 7, 2006, but as usual given our poor mailing system we decided to extend the contest until December 21, 2006. As is the case with all of our writing contests, all pieces submitted will be featured in the BWO (Beat Without) section of the "big" Beat over several issues. And once all have been featured, The Beat editors will read and vote on their four favorites. From these reads, our top-vote-getter will receive a one-hundred-dollar money order. Our second place winner will get a fifty-dollar money order. And our third and fourth-place winners will receive twenty-five-dollar money orders. Good luck Big Beat writers!

One more thing, give us another minute of your time to pay our great respects to this week's POW (Piece Of the Week) writers, they are Big vic, Snowman, Young L, Freeman, Vanessa, Lil' Soldier, and P all from the 150 Crew. From SF/YGC we have Sybreea, Rosevette, and Maya. Last but not least we have Brett from Santa Cruz.

Well, before we go we have to do our weekly dedication... Drum roll please... we'd like to give a shout out to all of our wonderful interns, for they truly are the backbone of this publication. Without them we wouldn't be doing what we do. And this is a very special dedication because they don't often get recognized for their great work. So interns this one's for you, we really appreciate all that you do. Thank all of you...

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The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our commuities already–we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

Spiritual Advisor: Jack Jacqua

Special Volunteer: Nancy DeMartini

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www.thebeatwithin.org

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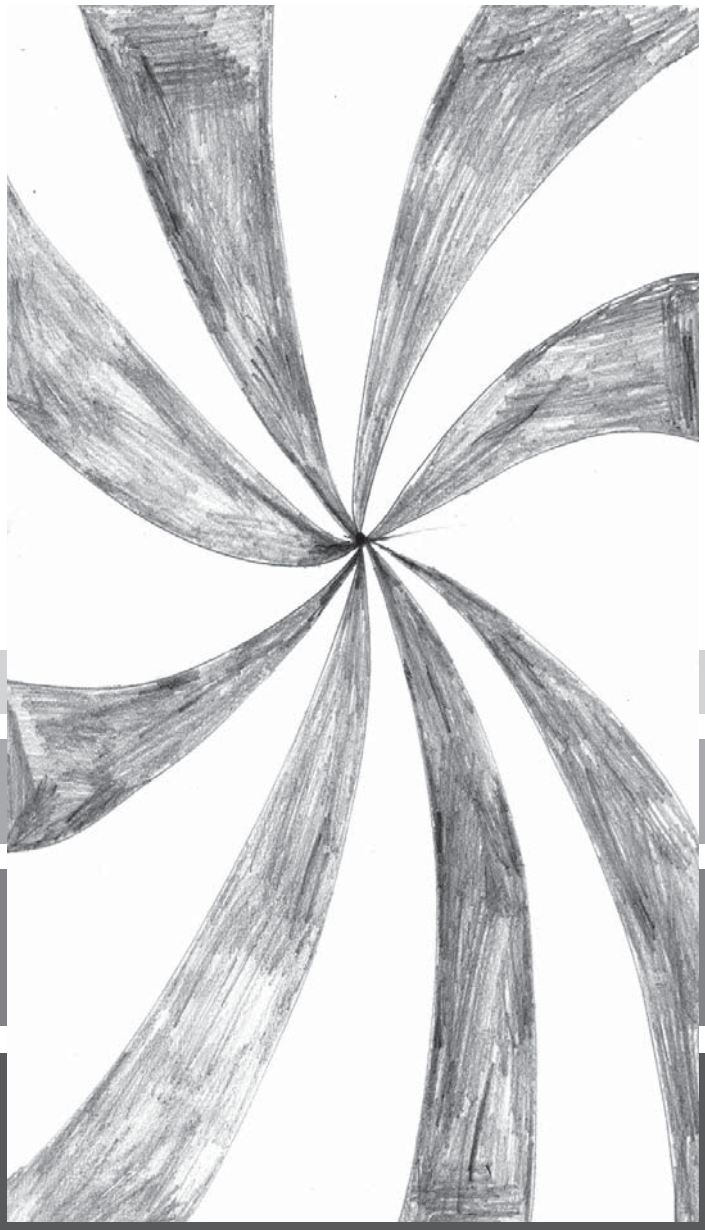


PIECES OF THE WEEK

Me — Or — Him

take a walk through my mind
who knows what you'll find
maybe the happiness that once used to exist
or maybe the rebel who always seems to resist
the bad, the ugly, and the worst
or the good kid who wants to burst
one too many different personalities
the one who takes many different causalities
or the one who always wants to express
the same one who wants to impress
the one who causes obstruction
and he never regrets
or the one who can always forgive and forget
which one am i
i'm not an ordinary type of guy
am i he — or is he me
it gets so hard just trying to be
the one who had hate from the start
or the one who has the biggest heart
the one that causes all the pain
or the one who wants the world to disintegrate
or the one who wants all the peace to reduplicate
my mind is just so difficult
i need a sign like a lightening bolt
i need to know which one i am
on the line where do I stand
to the left or the right
one says no the other says fight
am i the one who lets out all my wrath
or the one who stays on the path
in some ways i am the two
but the secret is i'll never tell you.
it's like two people in one being
just imagine the things i be seeing
the terror, the horror, the fright
the good the in the day, the bad in the night
i got to live through the two personalities
it's just part of my reality

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

***From The Beat:** No, you can't settle for that, 'cause everyone we know who's passed through here and stopped there where you say you're at — half this and half that — have everyone fallen prey to the evil side, the bad, the angry, selfish and mad! And what's more, every one has paid the price, and some more than once 'cause they got that second chance and (staying half and half, gave the haters in the system the last laugh) paid with the price of their freedom twice while others the wasted that second try in a shoot out (and this isn't make-believe when we tell you) they died. So you have one single task, one single war to win at last, and the battlefield is your mind and heart — and you can't settle for less than total surrender of all that anger, (false) pride and hate, the total surrender of the nihilistic rebel who otherwise will fix your fate no matter what miracle of mercy and grace comes your way. 'Cause if half of you praises God for giving you the nod and putting you back in the game of life, while the other half laughs out loud and refuses all compassionate wisdom and advice, feeling the demonic power called the anti-Christ flower in his heart and soul to seize control of his brain's decisions, all his thinking in the grasp of Mr. Hyde while good Dr. Jeckyll finally dies ... or sends home postcards from the pen' declaring than none of what happened was up to him. What we're saying is, while there may no pure Dr. Jeckyll, you better find the faith to put yourself in thrall to a loving God 'cause Mr. Hyde will never settle for half of all you've got — he's sooner destroy the world and you, too. But in the end, he'll settle for just destroying you. So trap his essence in a mask, define its every line of advance, and burn it in a furnace of desire — your love of freedom totally surrendered to the higher cause of God's good will; it's the road to your salvation still.*

I Like To Write

I write because... I like to. It's something I would like to be in the future, a writer, author, or a journalist. I write in my spare time. I used to write poetry. I even had a book with poetry in it.

I write because it's a way I can express myself. Sometimes I write down something so I won't forget something very important. Sometimes it's better to express yourself on paper than by saying it. That is why I like to write.

-Sybreea GU, SF/YGC

***From The Beat:** We are so glad that we can give you, as a budding writer/journalist, an outlet for your writing. The more you write, the better it gets. We hope to see your book in the future Sybreea!*

I Wish

I wish it would snow,
so I wouldn't miss the outside,
but that's just a dream,
a letter to Santa with no address,
just salt on my snow.
I'm looking at the mirror, not seeing an image,
but the burden behind me,
keeping my past a secret.
I'm patiently building a new past,
protecting my present.

-Brett, Santa Cruz

***From The Beat:** If only we could build a new past. Though it can't really be done, word wizardry like yours comes close to it. This is another beautiful piece. Well done.*

take a walk through my mind
who knows what you'll find
maybe the happiness that
once used to exist
or maybe the rebel who
always seems to resist

Writing Makes Me Feel Free

I write because writing make me feel free
I'm locked up in the halls, and I can't be me
When I write, I think real deep
But at night , I can't write so I can't sleep
Now it's Halloween day
And I can't go out to play
So when I do go to sleep I pray
And I think about my mom in each and every way

I write because writing make me feel successful
Now since I'm locked up I start thinking about my education
But the more I think about it, I think the system tries to put me on medication

I write because writing make me feel free
I'm locked up in the halls, and I can't be me
I write, because writing make me feel successful.

-Rosevette GU, SF/YGC

***From The Beat:** We are glad to hear what writing does for you, Rosevette. When you are locked up, sometimes writing is your only way to escape reality and escape to a world you are more familiar with, a world where you are free to roam, speak, and/or think. Did you write before you started writing for The Beat? What kinds of things do you like to write about when you are free?*

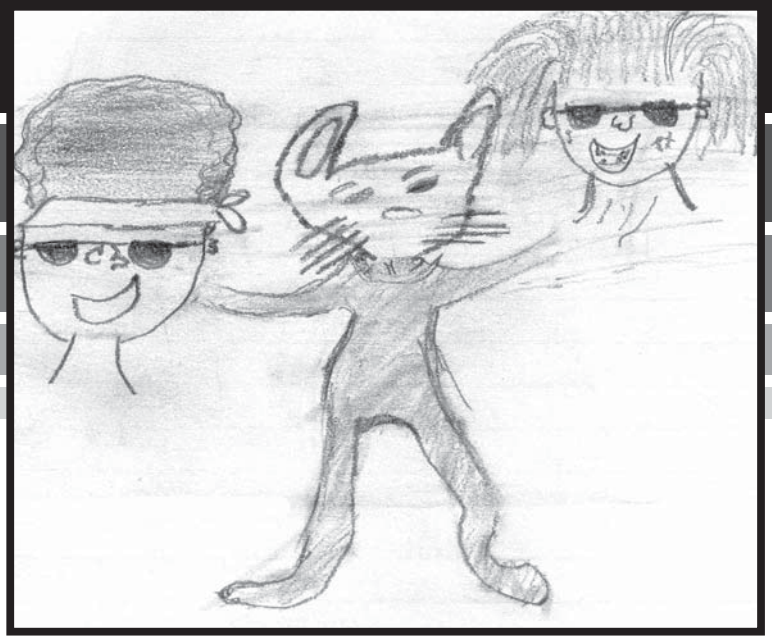
PIECES OF THE WEEK

I Write Because...

I write because I want to let my family know how much I love them.
I never tell them and I need to.
I am goin' so far down I may never be able to tell them again.
I also hope they can forgive me for everything I've done wrong.
I think my family don't love me no more
'cause I never am able to do good all I do is bad.
I can't show no emotion 'cause the way I was raised
so I have a hard time sayin' I love you because I don't really feel it.
I just expect everybody to turn their backs on me.
But they ain't yet so I gotta stop this trail I'm carving and start a new one
where I'm the only one walking and ain't no one tellin' me where to go.
So I've been in juvi for a minute
but when I get out it's time to change and make my way back
into my family's, my girl's, and my daughter's life and make mine and theirs better
so I can get a good job and live a good life without incarceration.
Peace out Beat.

-Snowman, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Excellent heartfelt piece Snowman! We appreciate the on-topic piece and we know you can do it, if you truly want to, because we can hear strength in your voice. Good luck, and don't try to do this alone, or without a plan. Find the support, or should we say use your support!



The Mind's Gift

I write because when I was growing up it was something I wasn't very good at and when I started getting better at it, it was an easy form of expression and ventilation.

I write because I can release my emotions without feeling vulnerable to being taken advantage of because emotion is everyone's weakness if they don't get the better of it.

Writing allows me to lay my weakness on paper and yet no one has to read it because I can destroy it or I can read it myself and tuck it away.

I write because it's one of the great gifts our minds have given us over time.

-Young L, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That's exactly it. Writing can be private or public, it can release ideas, pain and other things that are hard to share. Words are what makes humans different than animals! Good for you for facing your weaknesses and getting stronger. Until the next piece, we patiently wait your thoughts!

Why Write?

i don't know why i write
maybe because i want to be heard
maybe it's because i want to say something
but can't
'cause no one will listen
maybe it's because it's better to write it
than say it
maybe it's because i might write
something that someone might read
and it'll help
maybe it's because i like to
maybe it's because i need to
because if I say it
it might come out wrong

-Freeman, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Man, you keep it so simple, clear and true, it's like we want to paste this up on the wall in front of our word processors for permanent review. Thank you.

I gave my life to a man who was heartless and manipulative. I could have and should have lost my life due to the way this man treated me

Borrowed

About six months ago I lent my life to a man who didn't care at all about me.
I ran away from my home and a father who has done nothing but love me.
I gave my life to a man who was heartless and manipulative.
I could have and should have lost my life due to the way this man treated me
I was beaten and held against my will.
That half-a-year is precious time that I'll never get back.
All because I was blinded by what I thought of as love,
but he thought of as lust.
But as I look back on the time that was sadly lost,
I wouldn't change a thing.
The experience has taught me a lot and made me a more intelligent female.
I know that I won't ever put myself in an abusive relationship again.
So the painful experience was worth it?

-Vanessa, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We're so sorry that you had to go through this terrible experience, but very glad that you feel you learned an important lesson from it and that it made you see your worth and understand what you deserve. How will you know in the future who to trust? How will you test the waters? What will guide you?

PIECES OF THE WEEK

I Miss You Mom!

Man, I hella miss my mom! She passed away when I was six years old. She died in a car accident.

I wonder what my life would be like if she was here with me. I wonder if I would be in a gang like I am. Or would I just be a normal ninja? I really wouldn't know unless she was here. — Now that you are gone, I'm hella missin' you. I'm all alone in this world. I have nobody.

My immediate family don't really care for me. My dad's all messed up. My older brah is in the pen'. My older sister is in Las Vegas. And my younger sister, she coo'.

I just always wonder and ask myself what my life would be like if she was here. One of the main things I wonder is: If I would ever have met my lady. Nobody will ever know. Maybe one day I could get some kind of a sign. I miss and love you, Mom! I hope to see you soon. I love you!

-Lil' Soldier, 150 Crew

***From The Beat:** You take us so deep with this piece. It's like every reader's heart will be beating in unison with yours, 'cause even if they don't feel all alone like you do, everyone in here knows what it's like to miss a loved one, especially your mom — and when she's passed on, so you'll never see her again on earth ... well, there's no heartache that can feel worse than suffering that loss. Still, the love she planted in your heart is still there. And if you water it with kindness and handle it with care, even though your mom is not there in the flesh, you'll never be alone — 'cause your mother's love will continue to grow in your heart. Make a new start, and we guarantee you'll see sign after sign of your mother's love that will never die. Watch for her in your dreams, 'cause her spirit is still alive. Or when it gets so quiet you can hear your heart beat, listen for her voice to whisper words of sweet encouragement. But don't wait to begin, 'cause whether or not you can see her, she's watching you and listening, too.*

I've reached my bottom, can't dig no deeper Tired of drinkin' too much, and smokin' that reefer

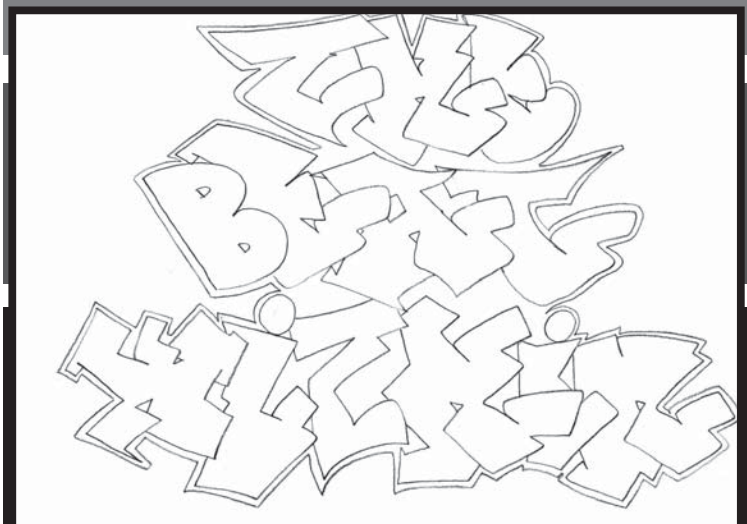
In The Middle

when i go to court
the d-a always has
something hella bad
to say about me
while my public defender
aka public pretender
has something good
to say about me
these two completely
opposite stories clash
and talk about a person
that isn't even present
in the courtroom —
nobody knows who
i am because i
don't know who i am

-P, 150 Crew

***From The Beat:** This is the saddest little prose poem on so many different levels. For example, (1) the advocacy system of the court proceedings produce rival fictions rather than seeking truth, and (2) the truth of who you are remains obscured in any case because you don't know who you are. In your unit, you see a psychologist, right? Why not engage in a dialogue with the express intention of discovering who you are? Do you feel the assigned psychologists can be trusted, or do you fear what you might say would serve to impede your progress toward freedom? When you are free, do you use that time to discover who you are? And what do you mean anyway by not knowing who you are? Do you mean you don't know what you'll do in any given situation? Do you mean you don't know if you want to do good or bad? Produce love or hate? Do you even know if you love or hate yourself? Man! You need to tell us more, not just to please us but for your own sake. Use The Beat as a tool of self-discovery. (Next time, at least try to write more words than we do — okay? We know that incredible poem you were writing, you hid away.)*

I wonder what my life would be like if she was here with me. I wonder if I would be in a gang like I am. Or would I just be a normal ninja?



Some Deep Shhh

I don't have everything
In fact I don't have anything
Except for a dream of a better day
And God to help me find my way
Bein' Maya, I'm sure to make mistakes
But I'm now willin' to do whatever it takes
To be the best person I can possibly be
And flee from a life of negativity
I've reached my bottom, can't dig no deeper
Tired of drinkin' too much, and smokin' that reefer
To abandon the pain of my unsolved past
It always comes back 'cause the high never lasts
I've tried the devil's way and found nothin' but misery
In my attempt to find happiness, but I'ma let that be history
Ready to follow God in a path of righteousness
Say bye to the lies and leave behind the feistiness
Live right, be surrounded by God's light
And have faith 'cause God told me it'll be all right

-Maya GU, SF/YGC

***From The Beat:** You're right, Maya, this is some deep shhh! Yes, you are sure to make mistakes, but not because you're Maya. It's because you are human, and every human alive makes mistakes (from which the smartest learn lessons...) Besides God telling you it'll be all right, we at The Beat are also telling you the same thing. This piece tells us that you have your priorities in order and that you are determined to walk down a new road. Let the past be the past and live for the future!*

CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

Healthy Expression

I write because it's a way to express myself in a healthy way. I've been told I need a healthy coping skill, and writing has become the skill. Through my life, I've coped by using drugs, drinking, cutting and eating disorders. So now I write when I get in a pissy mood or just get tired of everyone. That's why I write.

-Ashlynd, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: We really love reading that you have been able to substitute writing for the coping skills you had relied on — the ones that hurt you. Not only do we think that writing is far more wholesome as a coping skill, it has the extra-added benefit that after it's done, you have created something that will last forever, something positive. That's a tremendous change in your life, so keep writing!

I've coped by using drugs, drinking, cutting and eating disorders. So now I write when I get in a pissy mood...

My Goal, My Successful Life

I'm learning from my juvenile hall experience, and they have taught me the right thing to do is the best thing to do. People always did say that I'm not a bad guy — I'm not criminal type; but I have broken rules.

Now I am learning a lesson though, from all this going back and forth between incarceration and freedom, because I don't want it to be my whole life. Yet it's really hard for me to do right. At least now I feel that I know how to handle myself and live responsibly out in real world. Things change! People change! And I've changed!

I'm not a criminal, I'm a comedian, and a friendly guy. I'm back to being the same person as the old Dwan who wanted to do right. The new Dwan who wanted to break rules, is gone. I'm back to being old Dwan, I'm my old self again. Old Dwan is always bigger than his problems. He believes in people always helping each other, and he would be there for other people who needed him. He always made people laugh, too, and he stayed out of trouble.

I miss my girlfriend, and I don't know if she knows that I'm in jail now or not. But anyway, I've been changing lots around here, and that's a good thing. Now they know that I'm really not a bad kid at all but a very smart kid that's friendly with everybody. I keep touch with everybody and make sure things are cool between us. I don't want no more trouble with nobody. I just want get along with my life. I want to get my high school diploma and then go to college. At college I want to learn how to be become an actor. I already know that I'm good at acting. So that's my biggest goal right now, to continue my education and do what I'm good at.

-Dwan, 150 Crew

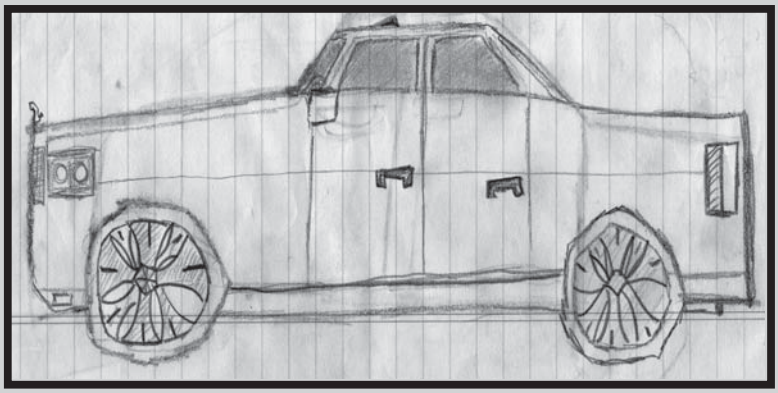
From The Beat: Thanks for an inspiring piece! You have no choice but to do this time, but you can make it a productive, learning experience or just stay stuck in the mind set that brought you here. Those who choose to do the latter, just wait to go free — but they don't use this time to learn how to stay free. So really they're just wasting their time here. They think they're getting closer to what they want as the days pass, but they're not really — 'cause the goal isn't just to get a release but to get a release and stay free. What's the point if you just come right back again? As you say, you don't want to spend your life going back and forth between incarceration and freedom. So you're using your time of incarceration to learn how to stay free, how to do the right thing. Of course, thinking and doing are two different things, but if you don't even know how to stay free, how can you do it? You've got a good plan that's teaching you how to be a good man, and whether or not you turn out to be an actor, if you continue to expand your knowledge in high school and college — that's the most important factor. Things change, people change; but if you're moving in the right direction, you'll arrive at the right destination all the same — 'cause the old Dwan is back again!

I Don't Know Why

Why did I get high
I don't know why
I'm so stupid
Sometimes I act like a little kid
I'm smoking my life away
Why do I bust, why do I pay
I need to stop, I need to quit
I can't stay high, I can't stay lit.
Why did I fly,
I don't know why
I can't stay smoking
I can't stay craving,
Why did I smoke it off a pipe, blunt or can
Why was I it's number one fan.
Why did I love it so.
It's probably 'cause, well, I don't know.
Why did I touch the sky.
I don't know why.
All it does is make me panic
Now I'm acting like a manic
I'm acting stupid it's got me paranoid
I'm having no more fun, it just has me annoyed.
What I'm gonna tell you is not a lie:
I QUIT GETTING HIGH

-Lil Mental, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is a great poem about the pains of being addicted. Do you think you quit because of getting locked up, or did you make the decision to quit before?



So Far, Yet So Close

I'm stuck in this place and don't know what to do. I know that this place is only making me stronger in many ways. I'm sixteen years old, and have been through way too much. I don't deserve half of the bull.

I felt so alone and so worthless until the day I came here and started realizing some real things about myself I never wanted to hear. I still don't want to hear it, but if I keep hearing lies, it's only going to get worse. I know I'm only sixteen having all this shhh on my plate, but better to figure out all this than to wait 'til I'm way older and won't be alb e to handle things in the right way.

I'm so far from home by being in this place, but so close to feeling worth so much. I'm stuck in this place not because my mother is here to ruin my life. I'm stuck in this place because she loves me and wants to help me. I think in a little while I can actually say I'm not stuck in this place. I'm in Walden House to get my life back together.

-Pinky, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: When we read this piece, Pinky, we think you are already at a place where you can say you're not stuck. You're moving forward. Is it difficult? Of course! It's always hard to hear things we would rather not have to think about ourselves, but in the long run, you are preparing the ground to build a future on. That is movement, and it is something you should be proud of yourself for doing. We hope that as you move through this program, you will realize just how worthy you are.

CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

Mom!

I know every person locked up misses they mom and family. Me, I miss my mom very much, but I can't see my mom any more, only in my dreams and home movies. She got beat to death by her boyfriend. I wish I was there when it happened 'cause I would have stopped everything.

I wish she was still alive so she can visit me and so I can talk to her about my problem, but I can't. I pray every night that she watches over me and my family. Also my uncle passed one month after she died. He got shot two times in the back of the head and in the chest. I stress off that stuff every day. I try to move on, but I keep having dreams of them and I can't forget it.

So y'all out there with moms, listen to what they say because they trying to help you out. So listen to everything they say and be good to them. Do anything for them 'cause one day they might be gone.

-G-Boa B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We wish she was still in your life too, G-Boa. But even worse than not having her there to lean on is the weight you are carrying around over the way she went, followed by your uncle so soon after! We don't have any advice to give you about how to deal with this heavy burden because we don't know how we would deal with it ourselves. All we can tell you is that it will take a long, long time for your dreams to let you go, and for you to start looking ahead more than you're looking back. Here's one other thought to keep in mind, too: As long as you are living, you will be able to keep them alive in you, and pass the knowledge of them down to those who come after you. We know she is trying to guide your journey from above, but you have to do some of the guiding yourself.

Hate's a Menace

a menace to society
is a danger to others
not caring for mothers
sisters or brothers
he does what he wants
no matter the cost
when it comes to love
his heart is lost
to him morals and ethics
are dead
so he will not hesitate
to put a hollow tip in your head
so when you see a menace
walking towards you
pray you don't step on his shoe
because all of his hate
will come crashing on you

-Kedrick, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You describe the disease very well. The DA could hardly make a harder sell for locking a menace away forever and a day. But now The Beat's a forum in which the menace can seek to make a switch and discover a cure, if it exists, 'cause the only one guaranteed to get got by the bullet he shot — is the menace himself! A victim might survive, but in the long run, the menace won't come out alive unless he gets touched by God or someone, and is born again (not so much a Christian but a compassionate human), or else lands in a high security prison which to some extent protects him from his own decisions. What we don't understand is why you identify so powerfully with menacing violence when you ought to know its consequence. You're asleep at the wheel. Wake up, we beg you, before your fate is sealed!

Now that I messed up like that, I lost her. She left me 'cause I scared her (!) and disrespected her that night. She just got tired of it and couldn't handle me anymore.

Go Back And Change

If I could go back into the past, I would change what I did to my lady on Friday. I messed up! As we were in my room, I was all stressed out, 'cause she had gave me some news that I didn't like. I guess I took it hard.

What I should have done, was stop and talked to her about it. But instead, I took it upon myself to just go off and smash on her. She didn't do nothing like cheat or nothing like that. It was just some news that made me sad, and if I could go back into the past, I would have reacted differently.

Now that I messed up like that, I lost her. She left me 'cause I scared her (!) and disrespected her that night. She just got tired of it and couldn't handle me anymore.

So that's what I would go back and change. And baby, if you're reading this right now, I just want to let you know that I'm hella sorry I took my anger out on you and I hope you forgive me. I love you!

Well. that's it for now. I don't really have anything else to say I'm out.

-Lil' Soldier, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Phew! Not only is this piece incredibly moving ('cause who hasn't blown it with a loved one at some point in the past), but it's so full of wisdom that it knocks us out with admiration! You display not only remorse but understanding, and while the one without the other isn't really worth much, together it's the most powerful combination imaginable when it comes to making changes. In fact, in a way, it even changes the past, at least insofar as it changes the meaning of your past action in your own mind — and now that you've written this, perhaps in hers as well, not to mention the changes made possible by you're displaying this point of view as a model for insightful readers to apply to their own lives and experience. Unless your insight is tied to a history of failure on your part to follow through in action, we'd guess that she will (with time) forgive you.

A Key to Life

Life is like a roller coaster
it can take you round and round and sometimes it even stops.
Life is what you have on the outs with your family not with your cell mates. So if you want to live that life do your best.
Drugs
Drugs are bad.
Drugs separate families,
money wise and love wise.
Drugs can put you in the places like jail, on the streets or dead.
I learned from experience
now look where I am at the age of seventeen.
Doing No Crime
I am locked up in Durango
living with these cats.
They think the crimes they do make them look cool.
But if you really think about it they're just making them selves look like fools. Because they got a good home to go to,
a mom and dad to wake up to.
No worries in the world.
Some people wish they could have it as good as others.
Lonely
Lonely is what a child feels without his or her parents.
Lonely is what a child feels thrown in and out of groups home.
Lonely is what our heart feels when we don't get no visits from our families. If you feel lonely you shouldn't be where you are at.

-Juan, Durango Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: We bet there are a lot of kids who can relate to your words those who have a good home and those who don't. Hang in there.

CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

Forgiveness

Why can't I forgive? I don't know why, but I am telling you one thing. I don't know when I am getting out. But I do know one thing. It's that I may never forgive the person that put me in here. And the worst thing about it was that it was someone I could trust, someone I could depend upon. I might never forgive them, but I still love them with all my heart.

Even if I do life, I may never forgive the person who put me in here. I want to tell my baby girl that I love her, no matter what happens. You are in my heart all the time. That's from the bottom of my corazon.

-Uriel, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: We hold in our hearts many feelings, at the same time. It's a wonder that all those feelings can fit in there. Hatred and love, battling it out. Sometimes it takes a lifetime to sort them all out. We hope you can resolve the conflict in your heart sooner than later. We know that you're facing a difficult situation. Our best wishes are with you.

Why I Write

i write for the beat
because i like to
but i think somebody
is listenin' to me
when i write the beat
or someone that i know
might see me in here
and they might write
somethin' 'bout where they from
but even if i don't know 'em
i like listen to what
people be rappin' in the beat
though some be weak as hell
but i like to listen to people's poems
it's just fun to listen to them flowin'
i sometimes tell 'bout my life too
what i have seen
and what i've been through
and that's why i like writin'
for the beat within

-Kash Money, 150 Crew

From The Beat: And at the bottom of your written page, you throw up your name like a graph writer. Then add a drawing to the page, of a tough-looking dude that needs a shave — and maybe you'll see your drawing on a another page. We just want to say, we appreciate your writing in any case. Without Kash Money every week, The Beat just wouldn't be complete.

I Write Because...

I write because... this is my opportunity. Not only because I'm stuck in here, but I am human and have deep, and strong feelings. I feel it's time, time to do right, so I not specifically or directly, but write because that's my hobby. Sometimes I say only I can understand that's all in my head, and I figure another way to make this feeling spread — write it on paper, my hand and faith tells me. They gave me the chance.

I'm not timid to say it — they gave me my dream. The Beat took my thoughts and put them in their very own to me special boo. Writing is a passion, desire the way out of my constipated thoughts that I can put on paper and no longer have to worry about. Most of all I write because my words are precious, and they come out of my mouth.

-Kendrick GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Not only do your words come out of your mouth, they also come from your heart and that's what makes them precious, Kendrick. We're glad to know that writing has helped you, and we hope you will keep this hobby of yours going. What kind of things did you write before you had The Beat?

Menace To Society

I don't think I am a menace, as in "a menace to society". I don't do things to hurt people. I may do things that can put people in danger, but that doesn't make me a menace.

I get angry when someone calls me a menace. I may end up doing something to that person that calls me a menace — that way they can have a reason to call me a menace! I think some people call other people menaces, to see their reaction. To me, it seems like people be trying to get to my head with what they be saying.

I'm that type of person that lets stuff go, 'cause my reaction will make me a menace! I have a bad anger problem, and a lot of people know that — so they use that to get me all mad! And I let that get to me. And it gets me in trouble.

But now I've grown up, and it's easier to control my anger. Now I can just think about the situation, it's easier to think about my reaction.

-JrOne, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We really like your conclusion! Yet your use of the present tense to describe how you lose control makes it sound like "they" — whether you mean staff or other authority figures — still do "get to" you. And in this environment where you're constantly being tested by peers, it's no surprise that someone with an anger problem will be sorely tempted to lose control. You need to totally reject that notion that if someone calls you a menace, it justifies your showing them what it would feel like if you really did act like a menace! We understand what your saying and why you feel like that, but as you make abundantly clear — it doesn't work out for you when you give in to that impulse. It's like you see the trap and it makes you so mad that you walk right into it like a crazy person. In fact, it is a temporary loss of sanity, and it does menace not only the target of your anger but yourself as well. So keep working on that anger management. Tell us what simple actions you can take in different situations to avoid losing the hard-earned maturity that gives you self-control. Write a piece, or several, describing situations and how you might handle them. When the situation has passed, writing about it can help you clear away any undermining doubt or frustration with how you handled yourself, reenforcing your success — your victory over you own self-destructive anger as well as over the trap set by your "adversary". And if, looking back on a conflict, you realize you might have handled it better, writing about it can help you see how.

I've grown up, and it's easier to control my anger. Now I can just think about the situation, it's easier to think about my reaction

I Like and Need to Write

i write when i am bored
it gives me something to do
and when i am mad
i can write down my feelings
instead of going off
but now that i'm in juvenile hall
i got to handle my situation
a whole completely different way
like now if i want to write
my feelings down — i can't
because we aren't allowed
to have pencils when we want
so now i just act awful
well when i was ten years old
i started two little-kid poems
and everybody just started
to admire my work
so i started writing ever since
so now i like to write.

-Marquilla, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We're so glad that you write for Beat readers on those weekly occasions when we put a pencil in your hand and a sheet of paper in front of you. Maybe you should talk to your psychologist about how being allowed to keep a daily journal (you know, like a diary) of your feelings would help you practice greater self-control because writing about your feelings helps you get over anger, frustration, etc., and because you love to write and it makes you feel good to spend room time writing. We understand that sometimes "room time" is supposed to be a punishment, but especially in this unit, the emphasis is supposed to be on rehabilitation. If they say no, don't act out — just next time you get the chance, write about! 'Cause girl, you can write!

CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

What's Up In The World

What it do-do? So, what's up in the world today? Well, let me tell you — a lot of murders, killings, and more people getting locked up every day. Meanwhile the government is building more jails, prisons, and juvenile facilities, than schools, libraries and after-school programs. See all we are to the governments of California and the United States, is a number in the system!

But to me, we are their money, we are their jobs. See, my theory is that if all the juveniles and the adults stop doing wrong in the world, the jails, prisons, and juvenile facilities will be shut down! And the people who work there, will be out of work! All those people love us because we are their pay checks. Well, until next time, it's your crazy uncle Fairlas. Peace out and God bless.

-Fairlas, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Our typist misspelled your name as Fairless! Nah, it's like you said, Fairlas means "fair land" — and that's what you want your readers to understand: They're just giving the meanest elements of government more power and money as long as they stay strapped in the street, 'cause it's not funny how many youngsters are getting murdered or how many years the killer gets locked away, serving no further purpose but an excuse to raise taxes for politicians peddling protection rackets. Money and power they share as job perks, placing the heaviest curse on those already suffering worst — the hungry, the needy, the poor. And every gangster putting it down just feeds the ambitions of these greedy, manipulative clowns. We need our readers to educate their minds, quit the street grind, and shut down the political ambitions of the prison-building kind.

Lyrical Murder

i write because it's a way to escape
sometimes i can't find the words to relate
so i put the pencil to the paper
connect my thoughts like two sheets with a stapler
think this shhh a lil' more through
get stuck wit' a topic like glue
i go on and on 'till i can't go further
i just commit this lyrical murder
i write because i want to let go
of this stress that's starting to show
playing this life like a game
keep on freezing on me is driving me insane
show the world my inner self
bottling shhh up is bad for my health
it's time for it to be released
my writing will never cease
i write because it's a way of expression
i write because it gets me over my depression

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Killing the stress by means of self-expression, combating depression with the vigor of verse that turns the meaning with every other line or sometimes the next word. It's an exciting adventure of the spirit, and all the more so when others who hear can find hope through despair and a change of heart when they thought it was beyond care. So wrestle with your devils and celebrate your spirit rising to the next level of combat — lyrical murder of everything evil that holds you back.

What It Do, Foo'!

Nah, let me quit playin' — this Lil' Cookie, and I haven't wrote for The Beat Within for about a year! I was in a group home, but now I'm back once again. Well, let me tell y'all the story.

Okay look, now about two-and-a-half years ago this situation started. I got locked up September, 2004, got released on E-M, screwed that off, and like two weeks later came back to the Hall in October. I was like twelve, stayed here till the twentieth of December, went to a group home, screwed that off, and in March came back to the Hall. Went to another group home at the end of March, screwed that off exactly fourteen days later.

That group home was Ukiah. They took me to jail out there, then transferred me out here, and I stayed out here till May.

The very same day the next group home came to interview me, I got in a restraint up here in Juvenile, where I got my arm broke by staff! Then I go to a group home a week after that with a broken arm — and I'm only thirteen at the time! So, while in that group home, me and my mom was real close. Remember that she helped me get through that program, 'cause I had problems everyday. Anyway, that was a six-to-nine-month program, but being me, I did a year and sixteen days there. I got released in June of 2006.

In August, I got a serious cut where I almost bled to death and died. I cut my main artery and five tendons! It was all bad. That happened in August, and let me remind you I'm still on probation at the time. I was not going to school — well, only an hour a day. I was disrespecting my mom, smoking, drinking and on like shhh — not comin' home for days at a time. PO pee-tested me and then gave me another chance. So my dumb ass hopped in a stolo, and my mom called the police, and now I'm here. I might be goin' to another group home or to Camp Sweeney

I wrote all this for readers of The Beat Within, because I got a lot of chances — and I still decided to screw up! What y'all need to do is learn from my mistakes if y'all can, and change y'all's life! If y'all can't, then change wasn't mean fo' y'all; and I respect it — tryin' to get money. I can't knock y'all in any way whatsoever, but my advice is to school (and not just one hour a day like I did, but all day, everyday). All right then, later.

-Lil' Cookie, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's always a little embarrassing and disconcerting when we're happy to see someone like you again in the Hall and writing for The Beat, because it means you messed up again — and we're no more happy about that than you are. But we've always respected your mind and your writing. Really that just makes it all the more disturbing that you can't seem to get your life together. We appreciate the generosity of your putting your mistakes out there for others to learn from, but why don't you learn? Everybody who messes up uses that "me being me" line, and we understand what you mean, but if you're drinking and drugging, it isn't the real you but the addict in you who doesn't give a care about the real you or what happens to you as long as you agree to get yourself high as soon as possible for as long as possible. The real you seems to get a minute to surface when you're here in the Hall writing these gut-wrenching, eye-opening pieces for readers of The Beat Within. We wonder how much your addiction gets complicated (or reinforced) by the fact that you're given med's in here which stop as soon as you're released. Do you think drinking and drugging is you trying to self-medicate? Would it be easier to stay away from that life style if you continued taking medication on the outs — not that there's a program that's doing that, but we're just wondering what you think, because maybe there should be a program like that where part of your probation would be meeting with a nurse who supervises your med's? Or then again, maybe that's way off, and what you need to do is what recovering addicts all over this country and world do — make staying clean the top priority in their lives, 'cause they know if they don't get that part right, they won't get anything else right either. One more thought: we especially appreciate your emphasizing that your mother helped you get through that program, 'cause it helps us understand that even when she called the police on you — she's not your enemy but your best friend. Much love and respect to her and you both.

CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

Dear God

dear god why you never get back
at your comrade
you know i lost my dad
to the crack game like way back
where is the blessings at
i'm stressing
so i'm guessing that you testing
how i react
i'm telling i'm gonna react wit' a thang
kamikaze spin off in this bank
and do my own thang
excuse me father but i gotta ride
and if you take this song the wrong way
i apologize
yeah i know it's against the commandment
but right now my mind is stranded
i feel like they
be watchin' me through cameras
they be canning
i'm demanding
man i'm tired of talking
next time you hear from me
i'm gonna be praying and walking
"where you going"
in case you wanna know
where i'm walking
i'm walking to the block
that's how my kitchen pots got hot
even my daddy had a spot
— never was in my life
he just donated some knots
on parole so you know
the ninja was like me
under suspicion
wonder why this ninja's was missin'
had faith
on the hook in the empty ocean fishin'
wish don't come true
but i was still wishin'
put in a position
the way i gotta pitch in
pimp broads 'cause i ain't really got no time for love
i grind in the hood up to no good
post up with iron and slugs
never forewarn you with mean mugs
i was that lil' ninja that didn't have nothin'
every time his moms need a buzz then
i ain't denying
man i probably told some lies
to the judge
polarized pictures painted
when i ride on rival thugs

-Chris, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's a shame you're gonna use the name of God, and blame your evil doings on His not showing up for you in childhood. You even say it was your pops who was the one that didn't show up 'cause he was out doing then what you're doing all over again. He probably had the same excuse for his godless abuse of the God-given talent he might have put to better use. And you want to continue this family tradition, keep the self-destructive behavior in permanent repetition. Maybe because you're out hurting someone else, it hides from view how your also hurting yourself — not to mention any children if they ever come your way: you're already damning them to CYA and the pen'. Do you really want to know when God shows up? When you have the courage to say enough to the pain you're spreading like rain, or should we say a rain of bullets — like you want to play God with your finger on the trigger and then pull it. That ain't God, that's the Devil — and you should already know he ain't playin' on the level. You're doing his work for him, and your reward will be his destroyin' your life permanently, buried at young age or growing old in the penitentiary. You're clearly intelligent, but all your thinking is irrelevant, 'cause you got it twisted and bent like a boomerang — and all that evil you throw out there is guaranteed to come back at you again. Why not wake up? Put God in your heart and start to shake up the Devil's perfect little plan. Stop being the Devil's errand boy and take a stand — put the God of Love in your heart and start acting like a man. Then if you ever have children, they'll see God's grace smiling at them with their father's face. God will show up for them through you when you're ready to be a man and do your do. As for pimping, every girl you use will show the symptoms of your disease, spreading war and hate from generation to generation instead of peace and love to the children of this nation. You can blame it on God in heaven, but it's the children on earth who'll pay the price for the life your livin'. (Ask that old man with a gray beard, if you have questions about what you read here.)

The Little Boy In Tha Dark

The little kid in the dark
When is he going to get out?
Bang
Another gun shot
And another person dead
Then another person
Laying in the bed
Bang
Swept away by Hurricane Katrina
Another one celebratin' his birthday
Bang
Another one laying in a death bed

-Lil' Purp B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We don't ever want that boy in the bed to be you. There's far too many "little boys in the dark." But even the ones like you who are still in this world seem to be in the dark about how to get out of a lifestyle that ends so tragically for so many. What do you take from this poem, Lil' Purp? What does it say to you?

Me, a Menace?

Menace to society — is a very harsh term to use, and it is used too often, with very little cause. First of all, the judge: he reads a paper written by a person that is paid to go against you! This (and some of the information it contains) is certain to be put on thick. The judge knows very little about your former life on which to base his conclusions that have the power to change lives or the way people think (and I don't mean for the better).

A menace to society is what he calls you, not knowing the good you have done, or the position you were in when you made your choice, or even if it was you! To better understand this widely employed and abusive term, it might help to know the root meaning of the word menace, which derives from the Latin word for "threatening" — "minax". Even without the help of dictionary, however, the term is commonly understood when referring to a person, to mean someone who gets kicks out of doing wrong (wrong, at least, from my point of view) and who is therefore at times unfit for the streets.

With these definitions of the word menace in mind, I say that it is rather some judges who are at times the real menaces to society due to the fact that they destroy rather than reconstruct or reform (especially young) lives. But now, I ain't even gon' begin to get into that line of thought, because there's not enough paper to tell the whole story — but Beat readers already know!

Now, on the other hand, we sometimes do consider ourselves to be accurately described by this harsh term, and those of us who do believe ourselves to be menaces are likely to be correct about that. Yet, overall, the people with the power to call someone else, or rather large numbers of other people, menaces — are themselves the real menaces to society.

-Rod-Rodney The Kid, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You make a pretty strong case, all the more so since what you write is a spontaneous response to a Beat topic as opposed to a written and re-written, thoroughly researched position paper. On the other hand, just as you point out, both you and the vast majority of your readers have had ample personal experience of precisely the point you are making. But for those who don't know, an expansion of the paragraph where you explain that while employing the term "menace to society" to describe the accused, often judges actively participate in a process of destroying rather than reconstructing or reforming (to use your well-chosen words) young lives, and as such, since sooner or later most of those condemned (which condemnation serves to confirm them in rather than reform them from being menaces to society) will again walk the streets — which indeed does make the judges, knowingly or unknowingly, willfully or unwillingly (believing they have no choice in the matter) ... does make the judges themselves and the system in which they play such a crucial role, menaces to society. Of course, judges are not supposed to be political, and so the buck gets passed to the electorate that refuses either to create, or having created, to fund adequately, rehabilitation programs with a substantial chance to succeed in reforming juvenile delinquents (for successful reform only begins and does not end with a change in the individual's attitude, but requires as well a completed transition into productive work with pay or study with financial aid). How 'bout forty acres and a mule? Ya know!

I Thought I Knew You

I thought I knew you but you left me hanging
I though you were a true friend
but it seems you won't be there with me until the end.
You led me to the life of crime and every time we got caught,
I always did the time.
You're not a person that I hate
But you're the reason I made mistakes.
I thought I knew you but my mind told me lies
Now that I am locked up my family cries

-Peter, Durango Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: Peter, it sounds like you were influenced by someone who didn't care about you but just wanted someone else to take the fall. At least now you see this person is not a friend and someone who will and has turned their back on you. I hope when you are released from detention you will assure your family they won't have to shed anymore tears and that you will find positive healthy people to be friends with.

Freedom

The definition of freedom is that you can do what you want to do
at the time you want it
or it can mean that you can go wherever you want to go
and that is what I think is freedom.
When you get locked up you lose your freedom.
You cannot do what you want to do or go where you want.
Being locked up means you lose every thing.
You have to ask for everything and that is what it is like not to have freedom.

-William, Durango Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: William, thanks for writing. Unfortunately it is very dangerous when people believe that freedom equals doing what you want when you want. This thinking can cause people pain and also makes people think they are not required to follow rules or have boundaries. Does freedom mean being able to walk into a strangers house when you feel like it? Freedom means you have the right to make decisions within the law. People who abuse freedom end up in jail or worse. We hope you will look at your time in detention and realize that in order to have freedom you need to follow rules and appreciate what you have.

When I Was Little

When I was little,
I used to think I was always going to be small,
because for a long time, I never grew.
I'm still small.
I wish I could tell you nothing,
because I don't know you and I don't trust you.
When I was a young teen I went downtown for Halloween.
It was fun.
I got a lot of candy and enjoyed eating it.
It tasted good.

-Malcolm, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: We think you should have your vision checked. The last time we saw you, you weren't small. But what if you were? Do you think there's something wrong with being small? One of the smallest people we know also happens to have one of the biggest brains we know. In time, perhaps, you'll come to trust us. But we appreciate your frankness.

When I Was Little...

When I was little I used to think that I was a piece of crap. The reason I felt this way was because my cousin and my uncle would get drunk and antagonize me and say things to me that would make me feel like everyone would just be better off without me here.

-Cody, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: We're glad that you no longer think that way. You now know how important it is that children be treated with love and respect. Maybe you're still getting over the damage, but at least you understand where it came from.

My Cell At Midnight

I sit awake in my cell at midnight, talking to the stranger in the room next to me about doing a whole calendar in this place. I'm wishing I could put aside the distance between me and my family, and hoping I can get through the obstacles that pile up in front of me, clouding my vision like smoke. I'm thinking of stories about my family. It makes my heart ache. I'm hoping I turn out to be somebody when I get out.

-Daniel, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: You are somebody. This is wonderful writing. Stay in touch with this part of yourself and pay attention. You are connected to those you love in many ways, and beautiful words like these are an important part of that connection.

New Fence

My charges pile up like dirty laundry.
Problems, like ghosts,
come back to haunt me.
The lies line up for miles.
My life's a file of mysteries.
No past, or history.
Think what you want,
but it's dust to me.
My new beginning knocked down
the old wall. I've got a new fence
to protect me.

-Brett, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: This is amazing. Tell those lies the show is over. They can go home, and take the ghosts with them. Whatever your new beginning brings, we hope you don't leave your poetry behind.

That Word

Being a menace to society is most likely saying you're a thief, gang banger, drug dealer, or even killer. That's what the man calls us.

Most people don't even know you, just because you made a few mistakes in your life. Yeah, everybody makes mistakes, even the man himself. Everybody is not bad people. Just because of these mistakes, they made it hard for some people, especially people who don't have the right guidance like a father figure, or even a mother, so they go out looking for the wrong way to go about their problem, and some people just hang around the wrong crowd, or shall I say the wrong influence.

All most people need today is the right influence. You know; a positive outlook on life.

-Zoey, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You're absolutely right. So many people judge a book by its cover, yet they haven't even read the story. Also, we all make mistakes, but it all depends on the degree of the mistake. What have you learned from the mistakes you have made in life? Why do you find yourself behind bars? Do you fall into one of the categories of people you mentioned in your piece? What kind of an outlook do you have on life? Do you have any positive influences in your life? If so, who are they and why do they have a positive influence in your life? If you don't, would you like to have one?

I Write Because

I write because it helps me express my feelings when I'm angry inside. I think writing helps out because it's a way to get things off our chest. I write because I have the ability to write.

-LBG B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Yes, indeed, you do have the ability to write. Why do you think writing helps us get rid of our anger, but talking about it too often only makes our anger grow?

Sometimes

Sometimes when I think I cry
Sometimes when cry I lie
Sometimes when I lie, I am not being true to myself
When I am not true to myself, I don't love myself
But I believe in myself
That I can make it in the world
So all y'all that believe in the Lord keep believing

-Shelly M GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Yes, Shelly, believe in yourself and in your future! Sometimes, we all feel what you sometimes feel, but if you believe in yourself, you can move past these feelings.

Don't Start Acting Like The Label

This yo' boy, Billitant, out here. I got transferred from Oakland jail. So I'm goin' write about today's topic.

What I think "Menace To Society" is, is just a label. Some people who are scared of criminals use it to keep people locked up or make them feel bad. I think a Menace To Society is someone who just go' around and hurt people in society and just don't care about no one, because some people take off on society and do crime.

So to all the bras, keep it solid and don't think you no menace, 'cause you start to act like one, and you don't want that.

-Billitant B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We applaud your advice not to accept the labels society puts on you by acting them out. We'd much rather see you put a positive label on yourself and try to live up to it — like student, respectful son, or good citizen. Do you know anyone you'd call a menace? What makes them so? How would you help someone in that category?

My Nickname Is Buddha

My nickname is Buddha. I write because I be bored and I don't have nothin' else to do besides playin' basketball. It helps me bring out myself, and instead of me takin' my anger out on people, I can take it out on the paper, and that makes me happier.

I know if I wasn't doin' this I would be gettin' in trouble. And I don't want that. I need to stay out of trouble. I don't like getting in trouble, but I do. But I promise myself and my mom that I would stay out of trouble.

-Buddha B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Did you get the name Buddha for your peace-loving ways? Is the Buddha someone you admire and know something about? What? Why do you think you get in trouble if you don't like getting in trouble? Have you ever made the promise your mom (and yourself) that you would stay out of trouble before? What makes you able to keep that promise this time?

A Better Writer

I write because it helps me express myself, and I feel much better when I do. Sometimes I don't want to write, but when I do, it help me be calm and I be a better writer and be able to do my home work easier and faster than before.

I also write when I make a letter to some of my family members across the country and sometimes they write back to me and I feel much better to hear that they are ok.

-Alex B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You've given two new reasons for writing that we don't think anyone else has mentioned. Yes, the more you write, the better you become as a writer, and that spills over into other areas of school, too. But you also write to correspond with family, and that reveals another power of the written word.

What To Do In The World

Every time I'm in my room
I think of what to do in the world an' on the streets
How to stay out in peace with my family
An' to see my family in peace with happy faces
An' not let them see me as a discrimination
In a gangster nation
But to see me with an education
An' to be proud
Of another brown
An' never let no one put you down
Or make you give up
But for real
God is the only one that keeps it real
So be in peace with your family
An' don't let no ninjas bring you down
So be in peace
This is your ninja, Lil' G
Wit' R.I.D.E.R.

-Lil' Rider B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We hope your family can see what you're doing and be proud of you. But even more important, we hope that you can look at what you are doing and be proud of yourself. You give some excellent advice in this piece, so make sure you apply it to your own life.

Lies

All I hear are lies from everybody, blowing like wind in my face, promising me justice, promising to help me out. Lies, like a blanket, smothering the truth. I'm wishing I could be out, sitting on the curb, listening to my favorite song. My weakness is my family. I just want to get home to them, but I'm not certain of my future.

-Daniel, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Well, we're certain of at least one thing. We're certain that you're a fine writer and that we look forward to reading more of what you have to say.

My Life

What's good Beat? It's me. I'm still here hoping to be getting out soon, but not going home. But anything is better than YGC! But enough of that.

My topic is about my life. How should I start? Oh, I know... Well I grew up in New Orleans, but when I was nine years old I moved out to SF because my great grandma had passed. Then when I moved to the Bay I started gang banging. Then I started not going to school but they are making us to.

But one love. Stay on game and happy Halloween.

-Connie B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We admire you, Flat Head, because every week you put it down for The Beat. Can you remember back when you first started banging? Was there a moment when you could have said, "No"? We hope that when you get to your program, you will write to us and tell us how you are doing — and we'll put it in The Beat Without at the back.

Fair Is Fair

If someone took my money I know, I wouldn't be tripping because I know that person. But if he did not give me my 100 dollars, then me and him would have problems. If I talk it over man-to-man, and he don't give it to me, then I would fight for my money and take what he got then leave him in the ground. But if he gives it to me, then I would shake his hand.

-Felipe B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We like this piece because it is very direct, and it presents a fair way to deal with people who "forget" to return what they have borrowed. Talking it over man-to-man is the responsible thing to do. If that didn't work for us, we would just walk away and never lend that person anything again. But your way works too...

I Write...

I write because writing helps me get over things that hurt me because when I'm hurting, it helps me take my mind off the pain.

Like when I got out a relationship, it hurt so much that I didn't know what to do, so I stayed up late nights.

I couldn't eat or nothing, and then one night, I got a notepad and a pen, and I wrote that person's name over a million times because I didn't realize how much I loved that person, and my heart was just so crushed, and after writing that person's name down so much, it helped me get over the sadness, but I was still deeply crushed and vulnerable.

-Vonnie, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We're glad to hear that writing is therapeutic for you. Is there any chance you and your ex can get back together? Sometimes we don't realize how much we love something or someone until its gone. That's why instead of spending your time behind bars, you should be spending your time with the people you love because you never what tomorrow has in store for you. We appreciate it when you write to The Beat, but if you don't, that's fine, too. The only thing we hope for is you never losing this passion that you have for writing.

An Easier Way To Lie

I write because writin' makes me feel better. It prevents me from hurting others, physically and emotionally. It helps to keep my spirits when they are lower than usual. I feel like my words are better said or "more outspoken." I write to express the way I feel about another individual (female).

Writing can be an easier way to lie. There's no eye contact, you can't hear the way it come out, and you can't see any body movements.

You can let the world know how you feel, when no one else wants to hear about an experience or what not. Writing is a part of me... from letters to poems and text messages.

I am an artist, writer, gangsta, father.

Writin' is what I do.

-White Boy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Writing is a trip, you can use it to lie, because like you say, all those "tells" that give true intention away aren't there the way they are in person, but it's also a way to tell the truth . Now tell us this, of all these roles you play – artist, writer, gangsta, father, which is the one that means the most to you, that reveals your inner soul the most?

Period In My Life

I wouldn't just direct these questions towards one period in my life. It would be very hard to because you lend something everyday. You give, make sacrifices, and risk something everyday. We make good and bad decisions that may change our life and thoughts for the rest of our lives. Our everyday actions determine where and what are the consequences. Well they do.

My message is think before you act. Learn and experience as much as you can and if you have to make bad decisions, do it young.

-Arianna, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What you're saying is true. We make sacrifices everyday, but sometimes we don't know what these sacrifices will be. For example, when one of you youngsters makes a decision to do something, whether its getting high, stealing something, getting in a fight, etc. you're not thinking you will sacrifice your freedom, but in fact you will if you get caught. If you sacrifice your freedom, then you can get caught in the cycle of the system for years. So one little error in judgment has huge consequences for you. Are there any times when it seemed like you didn't have a choice and you made a bad decision, but looking back, you wish you had been more cautious and aware of your own actions? If yes, it means you're on the right path to self-awareness

I Write Because. . .

I write because it takes a lot of problems off my head. I have a lot of stress I let out by writing. It is a lot of fun, too.

When you're mad, you will write and let some anger out so you won't get yourself in trouble and come to jail. Coming to jail is not too much fun! You will be locked up for along time, and you really can't do nothing. So do not go to jail if you don't want to be in there the rest of your life.

I write because it cools me down, and I solve my problem by writing instead of taking it out on someone else.

-Demetrus, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You have been a real role model in our pages, showing others how to write your way through and out of stress. With admiration, we've watched you do it time and again since you've been here. Yet it is a tool you can take home with you and use to help you stay out of trouble in the free world, too. Props.

I Just Wanted To Say

I just want to let every one of you young ladies that plan on having babies, know that it's not easy. If you plan on having a baby young, you should know for sure that you can really take care of yo' child.

I'm a sixteen-year-old mother who really thought that I could take care of my baby daughter all on my own, but I really couldn't. I really can't 'cause it's too hard for me to do it alone. If it was not for my mom, I would not be able to take care of her at all. So, think before you decide to have a baby, young ladies.

-Crystal, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We know you write from experience, and we appreciate the piece directed for our young ladies. Tell us what is the hardest part of having a baby? When did you realize you were not prepared for motherhood? Also tell us what you enjoy most about being a mom? We're listening.

Feel Where I'm Coming From

My mind is going downhill, I feel like it's over for me. Like I can't never get that edge to life. I want myself to feel like I'm coming up, not falling down.

I'm locked up. I don't think of it as a punishment. I think of it as if I was on the street, I'd probably be deceased. So I'm willing to come forward and do what I have to do. It's not all about robbery and killing.

How about giving some instead of taking?

But I'm only one person. If everybody did think like this, it would be ok we will have some hope.

I write because it keeps me coo'.

I don't write and think that it's going to help my problems. I write so other people can feel where I'm coming from.

Still I keep it real.

-Dionte, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We'd never say that that writing can fix a person's life... but writing, as you've shown so well here, can help you write a blue print of your life, help you make connections, and, finally, help you do what you just said needs to be happen: Writing is giving, not taking. Thanks for the gift of this piece.

Can't Trust

Something I can really never give back is my trust because I trusted someone I really thought was a true friend and since I've never really had a lot of friends. I really didn't bother too look for any the true friends.

I only had my best friend Pookie, who I been knowing since I was three/four and my family too. I had no problem nor experiences of mistrusting everybody! We told each other everything... well we didn't tell, we wrote and we also talked and we come to find out we went with the same group of boys they were actually a gang and we loved them so much! And of course she stabbed me in my back.

-Britoria, 150 Crew

From The Beat: How did she stab you in the back? And if you were to put yourself in her shoes, what would her side of the story be?

Menace To Society

i hear this term a lot
when i go to court
the judge is always calling me that
i hate when he calls me that
because he knows nothing about me
only what he reads
i really don't think i am
at least i hope i'm not
i may do things
but that's not what i am

-Big Sterling, 150 Crew

From The Beat: At the end of this clear and honest little piece, you hit on the most important part for you – 'cause you have no power over what the judge or DA does or doesn't do. It's time to be yourself, and not continue to do those things that are hazardous to your freedom and mental health — or you'll make their lie more powerful than your truth. It's time to do you!

Solid With Yourself

Check it out Beat, it's ya' bra Lil' Josh, feel me. Life is short so you gotta make the best of it.

Man I got a one and a half year old daughter and I'm locked up, doin' time for something I didn't do! Now they tryna hook me to a murder.

Trial time now, I'm gonna beast the shhh out.

For all you ninjas out there, before you keep it solid with yo' patnas, keep it solid with yo' self first. Fo' real. I'm a youngsta but I know the game, 16 years old still in this shhh. For all y'all strugglin', get yo' knowledge, go to school. The streets ain't goin' nowhere , so handle yo ' business and keep yo' head up.

-Lil' Josh, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It sounds like you're a youngsta who had to man up quick, to face up to the responsibilities of being a father. Some young men run away from that responsibility – our respect goes to you for the fact that you haven't done that. And the message you pass on to Beat readers is real – keep it solid for yourself. What is the best way for you to keep it solid with yourself?

Because It's What I Do

I write because it's what I do.
I write this stuff for me and you
I write these words for just a few -- and the The Beat.
I write to see the light.
I write because it's open mike.
I write because it's what I like.
I write this stuff for you,
I hope you like the reason why I write.

-Paul, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We like the reason why you write, and we like what you write even more. A lot can be taken away from a person: Family, freedom, possessions. But if you have the power of the pen (like you do), there is a part of you that no one will ever be able to take away from you. No matter what.

I Write Because I Can't Speak

Or will you let me
I got weight on my shoulder, I'm weak
Can you respect me
It's hard for a man to admit all out,
And love the words in my mouth like spit
Who am I, I'm the prince.
I write because I have a gift
I cried so many tears, thinking life's a trip
I feel like 'Pac, living life in the limelight
"I don't need a gun" you live by it you'll die by it
Before you leave, I bet you'll lie by it.
Just go all-out or die trying

-Wheazie-wop, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What is great about this flow of yours is that you're not afraid to write about the conflicts, the side of you relying on the gun, the side of you that fears his own week. As for your final battle-cry "Go all out, or die trying," we see that you're a messenger and we think it's easier to die trying, than to live trying.

I Love Lanaya

I write when I want to express myself and let what's on my mind out in some way. What I've been holding in I can just get it out on a piece of paper. So let me express myself:

First off, I've been thinking a lot about what the hell I'm doin' in this place when I got a baby at home. What I was thinking I really don't know.

I always told my bra, don't pop pills and then I went out and popped a pill and got caught up in a robbery when I was suppose to be home with my baby. Damn I'm sittin' in this bootsie ass place.

When I get home I'm gonna do what I gotta do to stay home with my daughter. Also, the time I've been here I've been thinking a lot about Marcellus. Like what would he say if he was still alive and I was in here. Or if he's really not gone and I'm gonna see him again. I always have flash backs of my bra and when we used to kick it at the old house I miss you Cell.

I also think of my baby 24/7 I wish I hadn't make the mistake of committing robbery so I can be home with Lanaya. I feel hella bad.

I can only see my baby three days a week. My mom said she be talking a lot now but I haven't had talk with her yet.

RIP Cell.

I love you Lanaya.

-Vanessa, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That must be a terrible feeling to be separated from your baby girl. And it must fee even worse knowing that it was your own bad decision that took you away from her. But it sounds like you learned your lesson and know that it's not just hard on you, but even harder on her. Innocent little babies need there mammas love ALL of the time, not some of the time, while their mamma is locked up in jail. It gets worse when she's olde rand understands that her mamma thought it was a better idea to make a bad decision and go to jail than to be a good mother. So we're really relieved that you're making the decision now not to mess up Lanaya's happiness.

I'll Never Push You Away

i'll never push you away
you're on my mind everyday
you're beautiful like the month of may
or better yet the san francisco bay
you treat me in a special way
between your sheets is where i wanna lay
i love you is what i wanna say
i want somebody to set my soul free
to my heart you hold the key
be mine sweet thing
come be with me
i'm caring you'll see
you're always on my mind
i see you in my dreams at any hour at anytime
in my eyes you're so fine
you're my dream girl
you're one of a kind
dream girl i don't know what else to say
but i promise
i'll never push you away

-Lil' Jt, 150 Crew

From The Beat: There are times in our lives when we survive only by the power of dreams. It is in times like these that reality bows its regal head to the imagination's higher realm and greater sway instead of crushing us dead with physical dread of present oppression — and therefore in times of need we look to dreams to find direction. And whenever we do, our spirits soar beyond brutal fact's mundane inspection and we shake free from the chains of reality to merge with a dream of perfection. And why not when it's the best thing we've got.

Getting Charged As An Adult

I feel that they should not have made that law about young adults getting charged as adults, because now they could send us to the adult court and put us young adults under the jail. They keep us kids away from our family a long time and we be stressed out and more and now that all the jails is getting fulled up, they is sending us to different jails around the world. When they do that our family wants to come see us, but we is too far away for them to come come see us, so now when they don't come see us.

We be up and they're so stressed out, hella much because we can't see our family and loved ones.

-Lil' Man Man, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We might just decide to sent this little note of protest to the governor, so he can find out how his actions are hurting the young people in the state. Remember that even when you're locked away from the world, your words and writings matter – your voice is too important to be silenced. This is why we are always after you to write more – we want you to show that paper "mo love or no love!"

Inner Self and Real Deal

What it don't be, Beat. I'm gonna switch it up today, a lil ' somethin' I call, "Inner Self and Real deal."
RD: Man, this shhh ain't cool
IS : Why is that?
RD: Why is what, and who is you?
IS : Why ain't shhh cool and if you forgot I'm your inner self.
RD: Oh, yeah, so you're the one who helped me get in here, I'm gonna whack you!
IS : Naw, naw, now hold your horses, before I hold them for you. I'm just another one that you didn't take the time to listen to.
RD: oh, so you're just another one that always tried to hold me back from getting' my money.
IS: Well if you once in your life decided to stop and listen to me, once in your life, you would have found out I could have got you money in a legit way.
RD: No pal, if I would have stopped and listened to you, I wouldn't have got my money when I wanted it.
IS: OK, but if you would have waited then maybe you wouldn't be where you're at right now.
RD: Yeah, I hear you on that one. But where is you goin' wit all this, cause like I said earlier , this shhh ain't cool, ya feel me?
IS: Hell naw I don' feel you. All I'm tryin' to do is understand your problem.
RD: What, my problem is you, dog!
IS: Me? Is that right? Well, check this out.
RD: Naw, you check this out:

IS: Naud who is you talkin' to?
IS: See now it's the time to listen to me and now this is what you say.
RD: I'm gonna say what I wanna say.
(to be continued)

-Lil' Naud, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We're not surprised to see that this week you took it in another direction – you're always pushing yourself to write better and better, and to take on new challenges. In this case, the dialogue between these two sides of yourself is fun to read and feels like it's really happening. It also got us thinking, you know how they're fighting with each other? Both these sides of you want you to be happy, they just disagree on what will work for you... so they fight, which leaves you kind of like a person that's punching his own face, with both fists! What would happen if you wrote this up where each side actually listened to the other person's point of view, then maybe the Real Deal would start seeing that the Inner Self is just trying to come up with new solutions, not trying to bring him down.

Menace

People have called me a menace to society before but I don't really take it personally or let it change my self esteem, because I know I've been a problem before but everyone can change and that's what I've decided to do and all that menace to society stuff don't matter.

For those people that think it's cool they fools 'cause that criminal stuff gets old fast and maybe it's cool for a little while but it will get old and they gonna be wishing they had tried to do something else.

-Sugar, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We certainly agree, but what was it that changed things for you? Or was it that society always had you mislabeled and you were just in the wrong place at the wrong time? Tell us about it.

What It Do, Beat!

What it do, Beat?
Yo' ninja is stressing in here.
I'm getting tired of this shhh.
All these people think they hard and be smashin'.
That shhh is getting old.
We getting too old for this shhh.
It's time we get out of jail and do something with our lives.
Man, I'm just getting tired of this.
Hope I can survive.
RIP to: Emmit, J-S, J.R, Jerin, Shell, Kim, Cell, Ville, Bo, Tommiesha, and to my two kids. Daddy loves y'all.

-Lil' Bra, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Damn, your piece is very touching. It's sad that someone as young as yourself already has a list this long of people you have known that have passed away. However, we think you're on the right track in regards to the way you're thinking. It's time that you get out of the system and start doing something positive with yourself. We can understand why you hope you can survive because nowadays, so many young people are dying way before they should, but being around people and in places you know shouldn't be at, hurts, not helps, your chances of surviving. We hope you decide to convert your thoughts into actions.

Why I Write The Beat

i write to the beat within
because most of the time
it relieves stress
it helps me have a better day
when i'm down
it's like when i'm writin'
it's like i'm talkin' to someone
about my problems
but i'm really writin' them
and that helps me a lot
another reason why i write
is because i like to express
what's on my mind
i also like to let the homies know
what's goin' on with me
and how i'm doin'
also to let the homies know
what's goin' on here at camp
i don't know why else
i write to the beat
that's all i could think of
well i'm out for now ... gone

-Lil' Soldier, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You got it! You get it! And it seems like those who write as if they're talking to someone about their thoughts, problems, feelings, or just what's new, are The Beat's best writers. At the same time, they're the ones who get the most out of writing for The Beat. We've seen really talented writers quit writing because they couldn't or didn't feel that connection you're describing here. It's the seed, the key, the living heart of the written word — and conversely, it allows the reader to feel connected to what you're "saying" and to "listen" the same way they would listen to a friend talking on the phone, say. They may agree or disagree, but they feel you. Thanks for writing!

What It Do!

from scrapers to chevy's
four fifteens in the trunk
is you ready
why they gon' talk
when you know it push heavy
lil' ma see it
and she know that we get it
box on four's
that's how we get wet wit' it
brah doing twenty-five to life
shot 'im in the head not once but twice
for some stupid-ash stuff
he should've thank
but he was too high
and too drunk off'a drank
he said the room stank
boys gettin' banked
if you do the wrong thang
then you 'bouta get shanked
life ain't no joke
i know people
that hung thei'self wit' a rope
my brah do coke
in the pen' they drop soap
am i goin' to the pen'
— nope
'cause i changed my life
the way that i lived
all the licks i hit
i know the man upstairs forgive
he had bad children
killing and dealing
making millions
once yo' ninja dies
then you get feelings
life's a pain
but it ain't forever
me and my girl together
girl i'm'a kiss you
tell the truth lil' ma
i miss you
get out in three months
can't just say it once
i miss you

-Lil' T, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Are you gonna hate 'cause we tweaked a couple of rhymes to keep your piece Beat appropriate in every word and line? Hope not, 'cause we got nothing but respect for the talent you display and the wisdom of what you have to say. We knew you could flow on a positive tip if you decided to let yourself go with it — and now everyone can take the ride as you flow from line to line, rhyme to rhyme, facing the pain and claiming the treasure, offering wisdom to whoever can use it along with the pleasure of lyrical music. Yeah, the man of upstairs is willing to forgive, offer you another chance and let you live, get the system to set you free, and if you can learn your lesson from personal history — staying out with your girl is the way it will be. But there are lots of snares, traps and temptations in the street, and some of them wear the faces of friends who claim to be down for you to the end of time. It can really mess with your mind, but you've got to take a stand, like, "No matter what, I won't slip back again!"

I wouldn't want my little brother to follow in my footsteps because I wouldn't like him to end up in here like me, just wasting my time in here

Write

I write because when I feel alone I just write about how my life has become and how hard it is to live like this. But when I think about it, I think it's my fault the things I did and what I done, but I wanted to be hard headed and never listen.

Also, I wouldn't want my little brother to follow in my footsteps because I wouldn't like him to end up in here like me, just wasting my time in here. But I realize the only thing I got to do is handle my business like one of my good friends told me. But anyways, when I get out of here the first thing I am going to do is go to school, try to get everything settled and try to live my life right.

-Carlos, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Writing is a great way to express yourself and just let things out—we're so glad you found it as an outlet because we know it's not easy to be in the hall. We're also glad you want to start a different life when you get out and just hope that you follow through with that. It's not going to be easy but you can do it.

Menace To Society

My last court was a real bad situation because all I ever did was get in a fight and the judge won't release me 'cause he says that I'm a danger to the community and he also said I didn't deserve to get released 'cause I'm a real bad example to other kids.

This made me feel like a criminal or kind of like a convict. I feel that the judge should consider us kids a little more 'cause he basically made me feel like the city, community didn't want me.

-Lil' Jt, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We can only assume why a person in power, such as a judge says what he or she says. Maybe they think they are selling tough love, and that their words will scare one into being "good," but thank you so much for writing your truth: that the judge's judgmental words only hurt and scar and scare you away from being the good man you want to be. Well, we do hope you do step up to the plate and make a better life for you and those who care for you.

Dear Momma

I want you to know that yo' baby boy is messin' up right now. He back in the hall. He is smoking weed and smoking 'ports, he is sellin' grapes and poppin' pills.

He is not fulfillin' his promises that he made to you and his grandmas, but he wants you to know that he found a wife his age and he loves her and is going to change for the better, and not for the worse.

I love you momma, and I am going to change for you!
RIP Momma!

-Lil' Poppa, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This moving piece became even more powerful when we got to the end and we realized that you were writing to someone who had already passed. The greatest love goes beyond death, goes beyond loss... and the letter you just wrote beats with the strength of your great love for your mother, and the love she must have felt for you... this strength might be what you will need to make those changes.

I Ain't Stingy, But ...

I've lent a lot of shhh out that I wish I would've never given out. Like sometimes my patnas will come over and want to wear some of my clothes, and I let them pick out a fit or something — and usually I don't get em' back! But I don't be trippin', because I buy my own shhh.

Sometimes I'll see one of my patnas that's on the run, and they'll be broke, lookin' down-and-out. So I'll let them hold a few dollars, or let them borrow some clothes. I really ain't a stingy ninja. If I got it, I'll share it, if I mess wit' you like that — if I eat, all my ninjas eat! That's just how I is.

-Young Weezy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The way you say you are, is part of what makes so many young men love their crew or their team or their patnas, or whatever you want to call that relationship you're writing about here, where someone making money on the street, shares it with someone else that's in need, whether it's food or clothing. It is definitely one of the redeeming values of what otherwise puts you and your patnas in danger, 'cause the game will always be full of haters, and in this day and age, you're more than likely to end up dead or in a cage. That's why we believe a plethora of legal jobs is what the ghetto needs, to stop the killing and keep young men free! Meanwhile all we can do, is print the truth in The Beat.

Dead Inside

I'm dead inside
My soul ran to hide
It's not because it got a fright
It's because it's running towards the light
My life is done
I'm having no more fun
My heart is cold
It shines dark no more like gold
My body aches
Just like the pain it takes
I thought I was better, I thought I was tougher
But in reality, I made myself suffer
I'm in denial
Why did I confess, now they got my file
But the cops can't do anything worse
I did this to myself, I made this curse.
Now I'm stuck in this heartless place
I have to win this case
It's an obstacle in my life, I have to pass this maze
If I trip and fall I get caught in the chase.
My heart beats fast, like I'm in a race.
Meanwhile tears fall off my face.
But still my soul I try to life.
This is my punishment... my curse... my gift.

-Lil' Mental, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We'd love to write a comment here, but it feels like your own last line says it all, there's nothing to even add. You understand the double-nature of your situation better than anyone. You are cursed by an uncertain future and mistakes in the past, and yet look at the gift that goes with it, this poet's heart, sure and strong, which will guide you through whatever may come.

Please Read Me

why is my heart so cold
'cause the girl i love
turned into stone
why am i so sad
'cause she left
me all alone
why i can't concentrate
'cause i think about
her everyday
why i'm so stressed
'cause the feeling she had
has been put to rest
why am i so mad
'cause without her
i'm always sad
why i'm so blue
'cause i thought
our love was true
why i'm so afraid
'cause i don't want
to be betrayed

-Benjamin, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is a wonderful little poem about a broken heart and what it does to you. Moreover the simple question-and-answer form you present, where every other line seems to give a rational answer to your heartfelt questioning why's (which nevertheless pile up into a force stronger than reason), makes the emotional impact of your poem that much stronger, as if the rational process by which you seek to regain mental stability, the very structure of reason itself — betrays you to your inconsolable, broken heart.

I did this to myself, I made this curse.
Now I'm stuck in this heartless place

Minutes to Go

I have a few minutes to go
I gotta stay low
I did something terrible
I can't stand it, it's too horrible
I got a few minutes of high school
I'm gonna turn into a mule
Why did I do this shhh
Now I'm locked up in the max unit
I got involved in some messed up thing
Now I'm being a fool to a king
When I'm out I'm gonna be good
But it's gonna be heard, I don't know if I could
Even if I should
But I'm still gonna be down for my barrio, my hood
I'm tired of Juvy, it's too much to bear
I'm getting angry, I'm pulling my hair
I'm tired of being between these walls
I'm tired of being in these halls.
Anyways, I'm not leaving my case in The Beat
That's gonna get me in trouble and bring me too much heat
But if you wanna learn about my case, here's some clues
Just look at the mainstream news.

-Lil' Mental, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your pain is deep/you're losing sleep/the system wants your soul to keep (due to a poor choice by you)/but you have a secret key/to escape the cage/a pen that releases all your rage/and your hopes and dreams and sorrows/you lost your todays – but your words claim your tomorrows.

I'm tired of Juvy, it's too much to bear
I'm getting angry, I'm pulling my hair
I'm tired of being between these walls
I'm tired of being in these halls.

Please Read Me

do you feel pain
do you feel constant
sad emotions
pouring on you like rain
sometimes do you feel like
going insane
constant thoughts of
having someone to love
on your brain
everyday thinkin' of how
you will maintain
but feelings of loneliness
you can't change
sweet kisses
tight hugs
cuddling
being true
and faithful
that's love
but when will i get it

-Benjamin, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your time will come, and it sounds like you have a lot of love to give someone. Meanwhile, get your life straight, 'cause in-and-out of jail is no place for love to stay. When you find love, you want it to last — so leave your old ways in the past.

This Bike, My Bike

When I was twelve, I got a new low-rider bike. I always used to ride it around the neighborhood and show all my boys. Then my boy, Wilshawn, that I grew up with, asked to use it.

I said he could use it because I grew up with him, and I felt I could trust him. The next day he brought back my bike with a flat tire and a broken spoke. I was real mad! I was about to fight but didn't, because his mom told me he would buy me new stuff for it — plus he was my boy that I grew up with.

After all that, I had my bike back and I didn't want to fight my boy because we grew up together.

-Atlanta, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We're glad your story had a more or less happy ending. You didn't lose your bike or your friend behind what happened. Many have found when they loaned something to a friend, they set themselves up to lose both the loaned item and the friendship.

i can write about family and friends
i can also write about smoking and drinking gin
i can write about something funny whenever i'm mad

I Will Never Lend Again

The last time I lent, was my J's. I lent my J's to my cousin, named Juicy. They were them new J's! The nines, the gray, blue and white ones.

Once I let her use them, I never saw her until by then I didn't want 'em anymore. But I ain't trippin' — they was just some shoes. But they did come in handy when I needed ... some shoes!

-Lil' Chad, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your story backs up the old saying, "Never a borrower or a lender be." Sharing what you have is a cool thing to do, but the borrower has to show some responsibility, too.

Why I Do What I Do

i do what i do
'cause i do what i know
if you don't stop
you gon' see the pen fo' sure
so you better stop
if you ain't tryin'a get blurped by them cops
if you keep talking shhh
you gon' get dropped
so just stop
'cause you hot
you on fire

-Lil' Chad, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your lyrics are on fire, and every piece you wrote this week takes our readers' consciousness a little bit higher. There's nothing to do but start doing right, 'cause everyone here needs to see doing wrong is a losing fight. And the ones that keep saying, "It ain't nothing to a boss!" — have already lost.

Why I Write

i write because it takes away all the stress
also because it gets you tired and i love to rest
when i write, i write what i want
instead of having to think before i talk
i can write about family and friends
i can also write about smoking and drinking gin
i can write about something funny whenever i'm mad
and read it over and laugh instead
writing, to me, makes me feel good
instead of feeling bad about my boy that got shot in the hood

¬-Atlanta, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You bring the reader the pleasures of which write, especially bringin' a smile to our faces, until with your last line you drop us back in the reality of funerals and murder cases.

They Say We All Menaces

They try to say we all menaces, because we been to jail more than once. But that ain't true, because we all can change if we want to.

They think we can't change, so they just call us menaces to society. But we just got to prove them wrong! We got to make some changes so they will be convinced that we're all not menaces to society.

But if we all stay the same we was doin' before we got caught up, they gon' keep calling us that — because they think if you can't get right, I can't get right.

-Lil' Chad, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Everyone of us that keeps doing wrong, hurts the next one coming along. We know everyone says, "I get mine!" — but everyone saying it will soon be dead or doing time if we can't prove we changed our minds and left our lives of crime behind.

Everywhere A Ninja Go

i see the same ass hoes
everybody a ninja knows
use the same old lines
every time i open my eyes
see the same old crimes
what's gon' happen when a ninja dies
be the same thang after a ninja cries

-Lil' Chad, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You see straight through to the awful truth. But even if you can't change the world you live in, you can change you — then despite what you see, what you'll be, is a young man who's learned how to stay free and succeed.

I Love You Julio

We have a special connection when we talk
I love spending time with you and taking walks
You make me feel special
And you make me forget about bad things
You really are my everything
I love your eyes and your dimples
I love the way you make me laugh
Not seeing you gives me a funny feeling inside
I feel as if I just got off a roller coaster ride
This feeling I have for you is true
You and me go together like paper and glue
I never had this with anybody else
I hope you understand the way I felt
I still feel the same
No, I'm not playing a game
You are special to me
Like I said, you are my everything

-Chanel

From The Beat: You may FEEL like he's your everything, Chanel, but your actions speak louder than your words. Whatever you did to allow the system to take you from his warm arms and put you in the cold embrace of this jail was more important to you at the time than he was. Otherwise, why did you make those choices? We are always much more impressed with actions than with words, so telling us you love someone means less to us than showing just how much you love that person by finding a way to stay together instead of doing those things that separate you. Whatever "those things" are, your actions show that you love them more than him.

Why Do You Play Games?

Why do you play games
What you want, fame?
I ask you, what's on your mind
And you don't even give a sing
I know everything you do
But you don't have a clue
You will never know what I know
But I'm going to show
So I'm just gonna sit back and watch you play games
When at the end I'm the one
Who's gonna get the fame

-Dimmples

From The Beat: This is a lot about someone else and not much about you... How do you plan to get your fame? There are all kinds of ways to be famous, but some are likely to leave you in pain getting there. So we hope that you're talking about achieving fame by walking steadily forward, starting with the foundation of a decent education. If you get that in place, then you're truly preparing for a successful future in freedom.

Pain

She hits me an' I don't know why
I tell myself she'll stop
But I know it's a lie
She plays little games
I just can't win
You asked me how it started
I don't know where to begin
My life is like hell
You can't even imagine
I want her to go away
But I don't think it'll happen
If you know what I'm feeling
If it's happening to you
Just keep in mind
You can get away too
Much love an' respect

-Angel

From The Beat: We're not sure who you are talking about in this piece, Angel, and there is no explanation of why this is happening. Is the "she" in this piece your mother or a relative that treats you this way? Why do you think it's happening? How long has it been going on? What do you mean, "You can always get away?" Have you gotten away?

Why I Can't Forgive

When I was barely into my teen years, I had something taken from me that was precious. I was gang raped. After that day I never felt the same way. I felt that I didn't have a voice anymore, like I lost a part of myself. I was always having bad dreams almost every night and they got so bad that I had to tell somebody. I did and I felt a little better. They told me that they probably wouldn't follow up on it since I didn't press charges in 2005.

I have not seen the guys who raped me since the night back in April, 2005. I have finally forgiven the guys who did this to me and the only reason I needed to say that was so I would be able to heal. I'm now 16 years old, and it has been a year and six months since this happened. Now I'm not gonna lie and say that everything is now OK, but I do have my moments when I think about that awful day. All I can do is live one day at a time and keep my head up, and thank God I'm alive.

-Brown Eyes

From The Beat: We don't understand why the authorities would tell you that you waited too long to press charges. Basically, what the government is telling you is that it's okay for those rapists to go free and rape some other young girl because you waited too long! It sounds to us that you have been twice abused — once by these little boys who thought they were men but never will be and once again by those men (and women) in charge of the criminal justice system who didn't follow up to prosecute the crime you suffered. Yes, you should indeed keep your head up, because you are the only one showing strength of character through your actions and your willingness to forgive and move on with your life. We know the rapists won't feel the same they deserve because they're still children (whatever their ages), but whatever system people told you that they wouldn't follow up your complaint are the real shameful actors in this sad episode. Thank you for showing us all — including cops, DAs, POs and counselors who should be as angry as you about this but aren't — just how a righteous and mature young woman handles something as painful as this!

Letter To A Lifer

Yeah, I'm eighteen and this is my first time in juvey. I'm doin' half a year. At first I thought that was a lot, but then I stopped to think that there are a lot of OGs out there doin' longer time in a harder prison. Then I thought, "Wow! I'm so lucky. I have another chance to get out and have a clean record too, and I'm just a youngsta." I don't bang, slang or carry a gun and I'm just runnin' with the wrong head and not thinking right. But now I am.

But damn, to all those OGs out there doin' life to death, my advice if you wish to seek it is to ask God for forgiveness and teach His love and knowledge with others, because no matter what situation you're in, you could always turn to the Lord and He'll be there to help you and give you happiness. Only you can choose whether you wish to do it. God chooses you but do you choose God?

I can't imagine what the people in the pen feel who have life (death sentences). I could never put myself in that position, but if I was, I know for sure I would be readin' the Word and praying with God because I may be locked down in this life. But God has something for all of us and that is eternal, everlasting happiness and joy. This world is only a taste of what awaits us. So to all you locked down, keep your head because the real life has just only a bit started.

-Marky

From The Beat: In this letter, Marky, you give some solid advice to the lifer that reads it. In fact, you've hit on one of the most common ways prisoners have to escape the mental torture of lock-up. Some do it with music, some with physical attachments, some by reading and writing, and a great many through religion. The Christian Bible has been a great source of comfort to prisoners throughout the ages, just as the Qur'an has been for Muslims and the Torah for Jews. And there are many other religious beliefs outside these major religious traditions which also provide comfort and a kind of "escape." Thanks for the thoughtful letter.

Dialogue: Gata And Brownie

Gata: What you think of those so-called playas?
Brownie: Look, I'm not no playa myself, pero them so-called playas ain't no true playas.
Gata: Why you say that? Why because they always get caught up.
Brownie: Hell, yeah, they be talkin' 'bout, "I'm a boss," yet actin' their shoe size. I don't like playas! Do you? What do you think about them "playas?"
Gata: Well, I go both ways.
Brownie: Hata! I guess whatever floats your boat! Naw, just kidding. It makes the two of us just know one thing.
Gata: What, sweet cakes?
Brownie: Just like a vato can play us, so can the girls. Specially if dey look like a dude. We turn our backs an' dere dey go flirtin' wit' the next broad!
Gata: But at the same time, I think females got more game because we slick about ours, feel?
Brownie: Off top! But then how we gon talk 'bout playa when we do the same shhh? We lie, cheat, and play them like a Monopoly game. Que no?
Gata: Well, I don't comprende because some females are dedicated to they man and they ride or die for them, but at the same time when we get played then we play the same game but better.
Brownie: I mean, I mean... well true that I guess, foo'. The game is the same but the player changes all da time. I feel you on the ride or die part because I was there for my dude...
Gata: Tootles. Lol! I mean bye dog. Lol! I'm gonna knock for the rest.
Brownie: Whoever reads it don't think we playa hatin'. We didn't have nothin' better to do. But if you a player keep up game an' be slick 'bout yo' shhh. Just remember, "What comes around goes around." Karma.

-B and G

From The Beat: Despite a lot of words, there isn't much here. We can't see much knowledge or wisdom or maturity in your dialogue, and wonder what you're trying to teach. We suggest as strongly as we can that you pay very close attention to that last line (we had to remove a couple of lines we didn't understand): "what comes around goes around." That is too true, and should require you to examine your own lives carefully. Don't worry about what anyone else is doing, haters or not. It's you two who are locked up and answering to a bunch of strangers telling you what to do, so it's you two who have get your own shhh together before you start looking at how others are living their lives...

Tears Whenever I See My Jefita Cry

What I hate is always looking at my jefita cry. It hurts, the fact she is in pain every night. Before I go to sleep I pray to God that you will be okay. It also hurts me to know you're in pain 'cause your baby daughter is not with you in these difficult times for you.

I know you're my best friend, my everything, and I know you are always there for me whenever I'm confused. So all that you've been doing I'm always gonna keep inside my heart. Also never will I have you worried and crying at midnight, wondering where your daughter is.

-Tiny

From The Beat: You are making some very important promises to your mother here, Tiny. Can she trust you to keep them? It is hard to acknowledge that we have caused those we love the most to experience pain over our actions, but it is incredibly fulfilling to know that we have taken stock of our actions, made some different choices, and brought joy to our mother's hearts where once there was pain. It's in your hands to do that. Good luck!

Brain Vs. Heart

I use my brain more than my heart, which makes me a hardhead 'cause I always think before I do something and I always will think up something dumb.

-Kendrick

From The Beat: First, Kendrick, how is it that you were only able to come up with one sentence in a one-hour workshop? You've barely given us the beginning of an understanding of how you make your decisions

My Prayer

Heavenly Father, please hear me tonight.
I need so much guidance to make my life right
Sometimes the pressure is too hard to handle
I often wonder if anon cares
How I can wake up each day
And live my life this crazy way
Heavenly Father, forgive all my sins
I do want to change, but where do I begin
Give me the strength to resist the night
Please, God, bless mi familia whose eyes silently plead
For me not to go as they watch me leave
And bless my jefesita who cries every night
Hoping that I don't get in an other gang fight
Heavenly Father, please answer my prayer
Let me know You are listening up there
When will it end
What do I need to prove to my homies that I'm down
And I am not a clown
sometimes I wonder how will I die
A bullet wound or a knife on my side
Heavenly Father, please hear me tonight
Give me the strength to be all that I can be, help me find the way to make it all right
Please God, show me, help me get the peace so I don't have to fight
Thank You for Your forgiveness, Lord
And for still being there
I promise when I get out of here
I'll start a new life and say bye to the bad layer
And than You God most of all for listening to this gangster prayer
Amen

-Pelon

From The Beat: Okay, Pelon, let's see if we can communicate in rhyme/Can you be down for your homies and for God both at the same time?/If you're doing "work" for your homies and it leads you here/Is that God giving you an answer you don't want to hear?/Do you believe God has a plan just for you?/Are you living His plan in the things that you do?/ The fact that you're thinking is all good and well/But you have to choose between Heaven and Hell...

Being Pushed

People in my life are always tryin' to push me in directions that I don't want to go, or are trying to teach me lessons about life. But I believe that "you teach best what you most need to learn." In other words a lot of hypocritical people out there believe it is their job to direct you or me where they think we should end up.

I don't know about you, but I think that's crap. I think that everyone should be able to lead their own life freely without care, as long as you don't put yourself or anyone around you in harm. Think about that quote next time you go to give someone advice, and think, "Is this what I want them to do or is it in their best interest?"

-Justin

From the Beat: We can understand why you would resist the advice of people you think might be in their interest but not in yours. But Justin, it is the job of the older generation to try to help guide the younger generation around those many holes that are there for you to fall in. It is what parents do with their children and teachers do with their students. We have no doubts that you will try to teach those children coming up behind you "lessons about life," whether they want to hear those lessons or not. So cut us old folks some slack. Hear what we have to say, because we've lived through many more years and, in most cases, many more experiences than you, and take what you find valuable and discard what you don't.

I'm Still Here

Hey, whats up Beat? Simon pues, I just wanna share how everything is doing up here with this Pelon up in Hillcrest Juvenile Hall.

Chale, today I went to court and they didn't say anything, like always. They just set up another court date 'til December. But it's coo'. I still got some hope because it's going to be before Christmas so all is firme. It's been a year and a half already, and I'm still going to courts. Sometimes I feel like they are playing me in the court system because I've been here for too long, and still don't know what is gonna happen with me. But hopefully, everything is gonna be all right. I got my lil' baby and my jaina out there. They are my hope!

Muchos besos y abrasos (kisses and hugs) to my son Jiovani and my jaina Angelica. Much love to both of you from your Peloncito who is always thinking of you two. I wanna tell all the vatos who are locked up to stay up and be coo'. And don't lose your hope because you never know what tomorrow will bring. Stay up and trucha. Alratos.

-Pelon

From The Beat: We hate the words "I'm Still Here," but not as much as we hate the words "I'm Back!" As long as while you're "still here" you use the time to your advantage — meaning thinking about your future and what you need to do to finish your education and stay out of here — then you are doing what you should be doing so that you never have to write a piece for The Beat that begins: "I'm back..."

Forgive No One

I find it hard to forgive God
When He takes the people I love
I don't understand His logic
He takes people with no tactic
All my dad wanted was his son
But God took him before my graduation
All for this I'll never forgive Him

-Anonymous

From The Beat: It took some courage to write this piece, though apparently not enough to sign your name to it... We can understand that, because the point of view you're expressing is not a popular one. On one hand, if God exists, we cannot know His mind. His ways must always remain mysterious, because He is God and we are not. But on the other hand, when we look around our country and our world, when we see innocent children dying, when entire races of people are viewed as less valuable than other races of people, when men still have power over women simply by virtue of their physical strength, when children are the victims of sexual abuse, when jails like this one are the reality and "leave no child behind" is a fantasy, when good people are taken from us for no apparent reason, when our politicians lie and cheat and steal and still remain in power, when the good die young and the bad get rich, when slavery continues to exist, when we can wage a war that has taken 100,000 lives and still justify it, then we understand why you can be angry at God.

Behind Bars

To Whom It May Concern: I am currently locked up, but I am not doing life. I can't imagine what it's like to be doing a life sentence or a death sentence. But I feel for you.

-No Name

From The Beat: This is just the beginning of a letter to a lifer. Wouldn't you like to know how he spends his days, what he thinks about, what he reads, how he keeps hope alive? Why didn't you ask any of these questions?

Finally Eighteen

All I been doin' is thinkin' lately. Tomorrow I'm gonna be eighteen. Five more months here I'm gonna be staying. I'm stuck in the system and can't get out. Well I guess that's all I been thinking' 'bout.

-Ajax

From The Beat: It's a hard place to spend your 18th birthday, but Happy Birthday anyway! You're not stuck in the system; you are getting out of the system. So, the topics we hope you're thinking about are what you plan to do when that time comes so that you never again have to see the inside of a jail.

'Till The Casket Drops

Once I get out
I'ma live it up
Continue where I left off
Stackin' dollars to the top
Reunite with my homies
Revive my happiness
You only live once
So give it what chu got
I don't let judgment faze me
My life rules ya dig
Say what you want
But I'm gonna do what I do
Forget what you heard
It's about what you know
Don't speak on my life
Unless you been thru it too
Don't tell me what my path leads to
Unless you walked in my shoes
Every person is different
Some suffer, some don't
It all depends where you stand
And what you demand
So remember my words
Real players don't get played
Real factors don't get got
So remember my name
Remember my face
'Cause no one can outrank my place

-Grumpy

From The Beat: We don't have to tell you where your life leads to... you're here! We read this and it's as if reality means absolutely nothing... You say that we don't know your life or where you stand, but we see where you sit and where you sleep, and we wonder why you seem unable to factor that into your vision for yourself. It's not true that some people suffer and some don't; ALL people suffer, from time to time. That's part of being human. But to balance the suffering, we are given two gifts of the highest value: life and freedom! It's clear (from where you are and what you write) that you're willing to squander the second of those gifts. As to the first of them — life itself — we can only hope that time and maturity will bring you more respect for it... before everything is lost!

Why Can't You Forgive?

I know I made a mistake. I lost all your trust. But it doesn't mean you have to go on hating me. I know you know that I'm sorry and I do feel bad. But why do you keep on ignoring me? I've tried my hardest to show you that I can change and show you that you can trust me. But you still can't trust me. Will it always be this way or does it mean you don't want to be friends anymore?

-Hector

From The Beat: We don't know what you did to lose the trust of this person, Hector, but we do know that rebuilding trust is a process that can take a lot of time. We don't know when (if every) you will be forgiven, but the only way to show someone you've changed is to live those changes. The only way to show someone you can be trusted is to act in a trustworthy way. If you are willing to hang in for months or maybe even years of building back that trust, you will be rewarded. It won't be easy, but losing the trust of someone you love is not easy, either.

Why Can't You Forgive

Well, I wouldn't forgive my pops for abusing me and my moms, but I'll just talk to him like a stranger 'cause that what he is to me, just a stranger. He has been out of my life for most of the time. The closest person that has always been there for me is my moms. Sometimes we have our ups and downs, but everything turns out good in the end.

-Jairo

From The Beat: We can understand why you would find it so hard to forgive your abuser — especially if you were abused at the hands of your father whose most important job is to protect his children! When parents abuse their children, it is the biggest betrayal of all. Do you have any desire to sit with him and tell him how you feel? What do you think he would say if you did?

Brain vs. Heart

I think me personally, I use my head more than I use my heart. I deal more with my thoughts more than my emotions because I put myself in a position where I always do the crime then think about it after. Then, once I get caught doing the crime, a couple days later I do the same thing. Like I said before I think after I do the crime. I think I stand with my mind. I'm still trying to use my heart more than my brain.

-Giovanni

From The Beat: When we read this, Giovanni, we think that you're already relying on your heart more than your head. If you were really using your head, you would consider the consequences before undertaking any action, and especially the kind of action that in the past has sent you to the semi-slave state you find yourself in now. Your heart is what is telling you to go with the flow, to follow the homies, to do what everyone else does — and not to question or to say no. It's time to put your mind in gear and drive yourself out of the rut you've been in.

I Write Because...

When you put something down on a piece of paper, people out of listening range get to hear what you have to say. And sometimes that piece of paper with your insight on it makes it to the right person and they might benefit from reading it, or they might pass it on to someone who will...Written words are how legends are started!

-Justin

From The Beat: Wow, Justin, that last line just blows us away! Do you have any favorite or special legends that started with the written word?

Who's A Menace?

Menace to Society – the definition to that is the judge, DA, police. How? Because they judge people around and send people to death row and people to jail (prison). That ain't their job. It really don't matter because they going to have judgment day. They killing just like that too. Sending people to the chair, or put to sleep. So the definition to menace to society is the DA, Judge, Police.

-Young P

From The Beat: We share your opinion that ordering citizens to be killed is a kind of menace. But if killing fellow citizens makes you a menace, then can't we spread that label around quite a lot? Is everyone who takes the life of another a menace to society, or just those "officials" you named? You say it isn't the job of the judge, the DA or the police to judge you, but you seem to have no problem judging them... If God is the ultimate judge, what do you plan to do in the many years you have before you that will lead Him to judge you in a way you hope for?

I'm Through

I've given four-and-a-half-years of my life to this system. Sometimes I wish they would give it back because there would be stuff that I would do different. But on the other hand, it has made me who I am today, and I am comfortable with who I've become.

On the 27th I'm getting out, off probation, but I can't come back no more 'cause there's no more options but CYA or better.

-Tyler

From The Beat: We approve of the main verb in your first sentence... Yes, you GAVE this system a significant part of your life. So now it's time to reclaim that gift, and never give it away again!

In This Life

Money is the key
And everybody you see
Ain't who they claim to be
In this life
The game is to be
Sold not told
In this life
People say they're players
When in reality
They're more like
Trackwalkers or
Some celebrity's stalker
In this life
No one is to be trusted
That's why I keep to myself
And a selected few
Who I know are true
Game recognize game
I call it how I see it

-Grumpy

From The Beat: We're kind of tired of reading that worn-old phrase, "The game is to be sold not told." We've been reading that same line in The Beat for ten years, and it makes no more sense to us now than it did the first time we read it. (Interesting, isn't it, that the person who first wrote those lines in these pages ten years ago went on to be one of the most gifted Beat writers we've ever had who, far from selling the game, became one if its most gifted "tellers." But that came only after he'd experienced the hall, CYA and then nearly ten years in the maximum control unit (SHU) at Pelican Bay State Prison... experiences that you have not yet had...) All we hope for you is that you will keep open the possibility that the way you see life now is subject to change as you gain experience and years.

Real Talk

We can live today
But we're not promised tomorrow
We could pass away
Sayin' goodbye to yesterday
No one knows when their time will be up
But that's no excuse
To ever give up
Time doesn't stop
Life goes on
You gotta stay strong
Keep goin' on
Life gets rough
You gotta stay tough
To all
Keep ya heads up

-Grumpy

From The Beat: You're right, we're not promised tomorrow. That's why we wish you'd be more careful about today...

Lent

The topic I choose to write about is lent. I choose this topic because I've lent stuff out and also have been lent stuff. When people lent me stuff, I either lose it or sold it. When I lent stuff out people would do the same thing. So it kept going back and forth, going on and on. That's when I realized to never lend anything, even if they are one of your best friends.

-Giovanni

From The Beat: Four hundred years ago, the greatest writer in the English language, William Shakespeare wrote in "Hamlet": "Neither a borrower nor a lender be; For loan oft loses both itself and friend, And borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry. This above all: to thine ownself be true, And it must follow, as the night the day, Thou canst not then be false to any man." What more can we say?

What I Really Feel For This Guy

Well, G'vole Beat Within. Well, I just want it to say how I feel for this guy. Well, we being going out for like two years already, and he ask me out on Valentine's Day, 2005. So he really loves me a lot, and he been there for me so bad. He's really nice with me and cares a lot about me. We are planning to have a kid in the future, and if it is a boy we are gonna name him Fernando.

Yo a el lo quiero mucho (I love him so much) that sometimes I do not know how to express my feelings to him. I wrote to his mom and she sounds like a nice mom because my man tells me about her. When I get off probation I am gonna go and live with him. Sometimes I cry in my room thinking, "Will he break my heart?" He says no, but you never know, right? I always think about him. He's in my mind every time. Damn, I wish I could hug him and kiss his lips, but I am locked up. What can I do?

I been staying faithful to him for the past two years, and am still gonna continue being faithful to him 'cause I really do have strong feelings for him, meaning he's the perfect guy for me. He respects me a lot, and if I said no it means no to him. I really don't care about how he look or dresses. I care for his personality and what I really feel for him. Aveces pienso que si el de verdad me quiere. (Sometimes I wonder if it's true that he loves me.) You know. He's a very sweet, wonderful guy by my side and I want him to be part of my life. Well, I hope I didn't take your time, but I wanted to express how I feel for this vato. This jaina is out. Alrato.

-Giggles

From The Beat: We hope that "future" in which you plan to have a kid does not arrive too soon. Having a kid is a major turning point in your life and requires the highest degree of personal responsibility. The fact that you are writing this from inside juvenile hall — and that you still wonder sometimes if he's going to break your heart — should tell you that you need to bank a few more years of experience and growth before bringing a new life into the world! He sounds like a wonderful young man, respectful and decent. But remember, that when you're locked up, the desire for love and comfort can distort true reality into something you'd like it to be rather than something that it is.

Just Catching Up

What's up Beat? I'm just bored, nothing to say, but I don't want to mess up the routine of writing for you guys. I don't know but we haven't gone to the girls' camp. I can't wait. I'm planning to go to Job Corps on Treasure Island so I don't know when I'm leaving. I'm doing home passes and I'm going on my 24-hour this weekend, but not sure because there's a female snitch who's hating on everyone because she's just jealous. So that's basically it. Well, I got to go because this period's over. Stay up and hope The Beat lasts a long time.

-Deborah

From The Beat: We hope The Beat lasts a long time, too. Why should you have to worry about a snitch? If you're things you shouldn't be doing, you're giving the snitch power over your life. In order not to worry about snitches, stop doing snitch-able things...

The Lent

Lemme see...besides lending my cousin' my clothes and my brand new J's an' earrings, an' dang who knows what else, I've lent something important to people before. Not no Jordans or clothes, but something much more important. What?

I've lent my heart to a person before. "Lent," "borrowed," not gave. Was it a mistake to let someone borrow such a beautiful thing? Hell yeah, but you now what? It really don't matter 'cause now my heart "belongs" to someone very, very, very, very special to me, an' I'm not scared to have my heart broken 'cause there's trust an' there's love.

And you know what else? It is all gravy because his heart belongs to me, too, best believe, and I know he don't want no broken heart back. I love you Baby. (Dedicated to Chikis)

-The One and Only

From The Beat: You say you lent your heart, so that means you didn't expect whoever you lent it to, to keep it. You intended to take it back from the beginning. Or, are you just using the words "lent" and "borrowed" because he bruised the heart you meant to give him? Relationships are always up and down affairs and always require both parties to work hard when things aren't going as expected. We're glad that you have someone in your life that you've given your heart to, but we hope you see this relationship through adult eyes knowing that it won't always be peaches and cream.

Writing Is Another Language

I write because it helps with other people's experiences and shows us what people go through. I also write to express my feelings on paper and to make history. People will look back and see how on paper people changed their way in feelings. I also write because it's a way to release stress and also a way for people to be heard on paper because people can't be shut up on paper, and I feel that writing is another language.

-Mak

From The Beat: We love your reasons for writing! Yes, writing does allow you to make history since your words will last on paper long after your body is no longer in this world. Shakespeare is still "alive" even though he died 400 years ago! One other thing about writing is that it can force you to see things in your life much more clearly. By having to think about things before putting things down on paper, you force yourself to bring things into clearer focus. Just keep doing it!

Rest In Peace

Chale, I didn't get to know them well, but yeah, they were down as carnales. They were young. Why God, why You had to take them away? I wish I could cry, but I can't show the homies. So I'd rather stay smiling and thinking about the good days of their lives. Big Foot and Chuy died in April. Big Foot just turned 18 years old in 2006.

-Lil' Vato

From The Beat: You ask why God had to take these young homies, but we want to know why these young homies were so eager to be taken? Were they living according to the plan that God had for them? Are you? We've only put two of the names you cited for this RIP piece because we don't just list the names of those who have paid with their lives, but when, at your young age, you can already list six people you know who have been taken out of the world, then it's time to turn that question on yourself: "Why Lil' Vato, why?" Is there anything you plan to change about the way you've been living so that our name is not added to this sad, sad list?

Menace To Society

I start to think back of what this really means to me, a chola, living a crazy life, through unseen eyes, always labeled everywhere and anywhere. Familia, system and even those who don't know you, claiming to know why you do what you do and your ways. Those parents who let you into their homes one day no longer want you kikiandola with their morritos (kicking it with their kids) all because of your so-called rep.

Even the government's taking away the homegirl's kids. They say you're not safe because of the things all written down. They say you're not safe because of certain things in your past. Now when you're aqui, in between four walls te pones a pensar (making you think). You know deep down that everything your family sees you by is wrong. Nobody believes what you say, and you're constantly under watch.

But when you think about it, why is it that homies are out there with jale (slanging), and why is it that homitos and homitas are out there throwing cuetasos (shots), just to get love and respect by a barrio? Is it because that's all they've every known, 'cause they grown up in the 'hood with jefes (fathers) who are now OGs? Or like the system makes it seem, 'cause we got no discipline? So instead of worrying about putting nombres (name) on each and every one of us, why don't they help all the morritos (kids) growing up in la vida that we once did so that this never-ending story won't repeat?

Q'vo's to all. Stay parados firmes (standing tall).

-Payasa

From The Beat: We appreciate the fact that you are trying to explain how children grow up a certain way, with the influences at home and on the street — and how the system makes things worse by punishing kids for what they do rather than by providing the help they need to avoid the trouble in the first place. We wish both the young and the not-so-young would make the same effort you're saying should be made here to understand the lives of others, and what made them the way they are. The tragedy that we see is that too many people want others to understand how they got to where they are without extending the same courtesy to others — especially "others" that they label enemies. Every single one of us came to where we are by being molded by exactly the kinds of things you write about here, and it's no less true for those we don't like than for those we do.

People will look back and see how on paper people changed their way in feelings.

I Write Because...

I write because
I know how
I write because
I can spell
I write because
It sets me free
I write because
It makes me feel good
I write because
It gets it all out
I write because
It stops the pain
I write because
I am sad
I write because
I can!

-Monique

From The Beat: As we said in our response to Cutey, these are all excellent reasons for writing. And we would ask you the same questions: how does writing make you feel good? How does it stop the pain? How does it set you free? And then we have a different question also: How is it that you and Cutey came up with almost identical pieces, and you were both sitting at the same table? Coincidence?

My Lady

My lady says she loves me
She said she wanted to be with me
She tell me that she wants to make love with me
She says that she wants to have a baby with me
She says she wants to marry me
She says that I am the one in her dreams
She says that I treat her like a princesa
She thinks about me 24/7 like I do
She cries for me
She dreams about me
She smiles a lot
That's why I call her Lil' Smiley
She cries a lot in front of me
She's nice.
I don't care about people
Saying that she's ugly or that she doesn't look good
I love her because of who she is
And her lil' feelings she have
I wish I could be by her side
She send me kisses in front of my homies
And I just smile
But I don't send her back a kiss
Because we vatos don't do the same
As the rucas these days
I think later on she will be my lil' wife
She will be on my corazon (heart) for life
She says she wants to be with me forever
Lágrimas (tears) come out of my eyes
Pero yo soy cholo (but I'm a thug) so I don't cry
All this is true

-Lil' Vato

From The Beat: This is a very sweet love poem to your lady, Lil' Smiley. We can tell that you truly care for her because you are looking at what counts the most — not the skin-deep surface of things, but what lies beneath. She's nice. What a simple but wonderful description of why you love her. Now, Lil' Vato, you and she have to find a way to "graduate" from the system and find a way to live by your own rules and not those gang rules that someone else imposed on you. With her sweet qualities and your intelligence and heart, we hope that each of you can be the support the other needs to keep you both safe and free — and together!

Why I Write

I write because...
I like to
I write because...
I know how
I write because...
I am lonely
I write because...
I am mad
I write because...
It sets me free
I write because...
It stops the pain
I write because...
I can

-Cutey

From The Beat: Oh yes, you definitely can write! These are all wonderful reasons to write. How does writing help with your loneliness or your anger? How does it set you free?

Forced to Write

I'm forced to write today. It's November 3, 2006. I don't feel like writing because I'm tired. My mind is blank, and I'm kinda lazy.

-Kendrick

From The Beat: Sometimes, Kendrick, it is important to force yourself to do things you're not feeling like doing. Sometimes it's important to push yourself to reveal what's on your mind, because yours most certainly is not blank! It's alive with thoughts, feelings, ideas, hopes, dreams, disappointments, fears, joys, love, anger, and much, much more that it's for you to reveal.

Afraid To Lose You

When I first met you I was afraid to be your friend.
When I became your friend I was afraid to hold your hand.
When I hold your hand I was afraid to be your lady.
When I because your lady I was afraid to kiss you.
When I first kissed you, I was afraid to love you.
And now that I love you, I'm afraid to lose you!

-Tiny

From The Beat: We love the way this poem builds up to that final fear, Tiny. We hope that you can put all this into perspective and realize that at each stage of your relationship, you feared it would be over, but each time you moved to a higher stage. Let that pattern continue, and try not to fear the future. Qué sera sera.

Quick As A Blink

No mater what happens in life
You'll never have the chance to think twice
All it takes is one stab at the knife
And then you'll be down to ride
Try to go with your friends to hide
When really you're seen just as wide
So stop and think...
Because life goes quick as a blink

-Mak

From The Beat: Yes, life races by, and especially as we move out of childhood it seems to speed up! So you are absolutely right that failing to think before you act can cost you everything there is. It's clear that you have done a lot of stopping and thinking, so we don't expect to see you here again.

The Devil Made Me Do It

Why we menaces to society is because life is the devil's playground, and his objective is to complete our lives by making us become menaces.

-Mak

From The Beat: We always wonder about "the devil made me do it" rationale. It sounds like the devil is more powerful God if his objectives overcome God's objectives. If "life is the devil's playground," then what is life to God? And where does our own brain (free will) play its part?

A Box of Chocolates

Life is like a box of chocolates
You only get so many chances
To get the one you want
So don't just dive right in
But choose carefully instead
'Cause one of them you might not like
And you might just end up dead
The game is rough, period
Mark my words, don't forget what I've said
'Cause one day you'll be a ghost
And there won't be no blue or red

-Ajax

From The Beat: We know you have learned these lessons the hard way, and we're sorry it had to be like that, but we're not sorry that you've learned! What you have learned has turned you into a teacher, so we can only hope that there will be some "students" who can benefit from what you are teaching.

Mark my words, don't forget what I've said 'Cause one day you'll be a ghost And there won't be no blue or red

Why I Can't Forgive Myself

I can't forgive me
And the reason that I don't forgive me
Is because I hurt my mom
And at the same time I hurt myself
When I see my mom crying for me
Or when I see her sad
She makes me sad too
And I don't forgive all the tears
That my mom fall for me
And all the times that I ignore my mom
When she try to talk to me
And I didn't listen to her
She try to show me the good way in life
But I decide to take the wrong way of life
And I can't forgive me
Because I can't believe
That I decide to be with my friends
Instead of being with my mom
And I wish that I could go back
And change all those things

-Yessica

From The Beat: The pain you're feeling is what it means to have a conscience. You are feeling guilty for the pain you've caused your mom, but you have a whole life to substitute joy and pride for that pain. Even though you can't go back, you can go forward... We know that if you make these promises to your mom come true, she will definitely forgive you. You can start by forgiving yourself.

RIP

Rest in peace to OG and veteranos always staying real aqui in the barrio.
They were hated but dedicated his love.
On the streets representando on them barrios siempre fumando (always smoking).
Putting in work. Doing dirt.
Fighting for the cause. Selling drugs to have feria (money).
The older heads used to kick it on the outs, but now:
Some of them are gone.
Some of them are from another 'hood.
Some of them are in the pen.
Some of them are in the army.
Some of them just changed their life around.
Some of them are doing life.
Some of them are in Mexico because they are deported.
But now there's youngstas like me trying to come up aqui.
The older heads like my homeboy Oso come out of jail and let us know what we have to know.
Dropping knowledge to the youngstas:
Never hate on the homie that is trying to come up.
Never disrespect no one, not even if they are from a different race.
Be a leader at all times... even if somebody is older than you.
Even if you know that you have more knowledge on your mente.
It doesn't mean nothing if you going to the "Y"
Do makina (exercise) that's all I recommend to you,
and if you don't know something about the game ask...
Don't be afraid to ask.

-Lil' Vato

From The Beat: This piece shows your true heart, Lil' Vato, true to those "OGs and veteranos" but realistic about how their lives turned out. And we admire you for laying out the differences in where those lives turned — some to the grave, some to prison, some to other countries, and some to a better life of doing good. So, in what direction is your life heading? We think the wisdom that OGs like Oso shares is great, especially if you can apply it to the way you live your life. (The rule to "never disrespect no one" should begin with respecting yourself.) You say that one rule is that if you don't know something about the game, you should ask, so can we ask this about the game: What is the cause that so many youngsters seem to believe is worth killing — and dying — for? One last thing — it's not just "the game" you should not be afraid to ask about. You should ask about absolutely everything that you don't already understand.

I Write Because...

I write because I'm forced to write because this is a workshop, and if I get time out I'm not gone get no program. So I'm about to talk about the day I got in the system. Came from da glow and felt like pullin' a lick. I pulled it, got my money and did it wigglin'. The dudes I was with got caught and one dude broke the number one rule: no snitchin'! So I did my four months, waiting for da snitch to get out of camp so I can give him the business.

-D

From The Beat: You can give him "the business" if you choose, but he's not the reason you're here. You're the reason! You knew the possible consequences for robbing someone and you chose to do it anyway. You handed up your freedom to strangers as surely as if you were giving money to a beggar, and that will be the case over and over again unless you learn to respect others as you would like to be respected. You don't show respect by stealing. So, if you want to give someone the business, we suggest you turn your attentions inward.

Clearing My Mind By Writing

I write because when I write I get to take everything off my mind that I have to say. The reason why is because I've been sitting in this stupid-ass juvenile hall wasting my time in here, so all I do is just think. And the more I think, the less room I have in my head. And when that happens, I just wanna take all that thinking and put it on paper so then I can make more room for thinking.

-Looney

From The Beat: If you're spending your time in here thinking, then we certainly would not call it a waste of your time. In fact, in order not to waste your time, thinking is a crucial process. Actually, we think the brain is like a computer. When you clear out thoughts to make room for more, you're not deleting them, you're just moving them to a storage area where they can be called back to the desktop whenever you need them.

Don't Trust Females

I lent my mom something and she said she would be back, but she didn't come back ill three days later. That made me pissed, and that's why I don't trust females.

-Peaches And Cream

From The Beat: So, your mom lied to you and now you don't trust females? Why not just conclude that you can't trust mothers? Isn't kind of silly to judge all females on the basis of one experience? Finding out that you can't trust your mother is one thing; generalizing from that experience to all females is not very sound reasoning. Do you trust yourself?

The Lent

Forget dat! I ain't lendin' shhh to nobody! I have done that plenty of times, an' it's gone... I needa stop being too friendly.

I need to tone down what I'm writing, too. I think my PO and my group home people read this, an' dat would be all bad, ya know?

-Crackhead

From The Beat: It sounds like you're more worried about making sure the "right" people don't know what you're thinking about doing than you are about what you are doing... If really doesn't matter to us what you PO thinks about you. What matters to us is what you think about yourself — and how what you think will direct your actions when you get out of here. So it's not your writing you have to tone down, it's your living...

Menace To Myself

Doing stuff that is not good for me, like when I robbed this old lady. She pressed charges and I went to jail. See, I paid my time and when I came back I did it again.

-Peaches And Cream

From The Beat: So what's the problem? Couldn't you see the connection between what you did and the consequences you had to pay? Did you think that the consequences the second time would be different from the first time? What about next time?

Menace Off Top

Shhh, I'ma menace off top. Menaces are people that cause trouble, usually are minorities in projects, poverty, etc. the feds is menaces, too, na mean? But just in case they're reading, I plead the 5th. It wasn't me. I don't know shhh.

-Crackhead

From The Beat: When you say "I don't know shhh," it may be more accurate than you want it to be! You take such pride in being a "menace," but you haven't apparently figured out that you are your own worst menace. Your mind is still imprisoned, and as long as you're tied to that old mindset, you cannot move forward. You have a great opportunity here to learn things about yourself and the world, but only if you admit that there are things you need to learn.

Why I Write

I write because I sometimes let my feelings go, and sometimes it makes me feel better because of The Beat Within.

-Peaches And Cream

From The Beat: I think we have said this to you before, P and C. Please don't write about all three topics. When you only write a couple of sentences (or less), we can't get any ideal of who you really are or what you really think. This is a kind of lazy person's way of approaching the Beat topics, because it's easier to write one or two sentences on several topics than to really write something important about one topic. So next time, we will only publish ONE piece by you, not three. Make it a good one!

Nothing Better To Do

I write 'cause I don't have nothing better to do... because The Beat follows me... because I can...

-Crackhead

From The Beat: Writing is more than just putting words down on paper, Crackhead. Real writing requires some thinking about the subject, getting deeper than just surface impressions, challenging your own prejudices and beliefs, and developing an idea beyond one or two sentences. This, however, requires a level of commitment and determination that we don't yet see in your writing.

SANTA CRUZ

Can't Forgive

Someone I can't forgive is the fool who stuck me in the lung. I won't ever forgive him. And when I see him, I know I'll feel like whacking that fool. That's the day I'm waiting for. That's stuff I won't forget.

-Really stuck

From The Beat: We'd like you to consider that three seconds of revenge could get you thirty years in prison, or worse. That's surely not worth it. You will only add to the misery you've already endured if you seek revenge. Please think about it, and get yourself unstuck!

Dear Lifer

All I got to say is – keep your head up and be close to God before your time is up. So, keep your head up and stay cool.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: And you keep your head up, too.

Halloween Story

When I was in 8th grade we threw stink bombs at houses and the people would come out and smell the bad smells. It was about the funniest thing I'd experienced, until I got to high school.

When I was little, I liked getting candy, and screaming like an old man.

-Travis

From The Beat: So, what was the funny thing in high school? By the way, would it have been funny if a group of kids threw stink bombs at your mom's house?

When I Was Little

When I was little, I thought Chip and Dale lived in my grandma's freezer.
I thought jail was cool and fun,
but I found out different when I messed up.
I thought guns were fun and powerful, and they are.

-Zack

From The Beat: Guns are about as fun as Chip and Dale ice cream. Yes, they are powerful, and dangerous. But they won't make you happy.

The Key

I'm searching for the key, but you say it's already there.
Your love for me is blowin' in the wind.
I'm havin' a hard time believing in it.
I can smell your scent on my letters
and I think of where our story went wrong.
You wanted a ticket to my heart,
but you're not giving yours.
I love you,
Kiss, I love you.
But if it doesn't stop, you're gonna be a shadow in my past.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: We think you should send this one directly to your sweatheart, but it's very well written, so we'll give you a pass on this one and print it. We just want to remind you, and anyone reading, that when you write for The Beat, you're writing for a very large audience. So, we ask you to consider who you have in mind when you write your pieces and to direct them to the appropriate audience.

Letter To A Lifer

This is B, writing with my good homey, also a Beat writer. Well, when I think of a lifer, I think of my good friend. All I can say is "good luck homie". Keep strong and get through it, because even with those twenty five, you'll be out. And think about your daughter homie. By the time you read this piece, I'll be serving my 17 month program. Kicking back with you has made my trial and my three and a half months go easy. So keep your head up. I'll see you on the outs.

-B

From The Beat: This is a sweet piece, B. Your friend will see it. Work hard at your program.

Scary Story

It was October 31, 2005, in downtown Santa Cruz. Somebody I know was stabbed. By the end of the night, seven more people were stabbed. To all – keep your heads up.

-Vesio

From The Beat: That is the scariest kind of story, because it's true.

The Lent

Back in the outs when I was flippin' trees and pills.

One of the times I got kicked out. I lived at someone's house I thought was my patna, someone I thought I could trust. So I fronted him 90 dollars worth of pills and weed 'cause when I was living there his parents were gone to Mexico and it was me, him, his brother, his girlfriend and practically all of his brother's friend's family.

No one had any money and we had to get our high on and since I trusted him at the time like a fool I fronted it.

It's been like six or seven months since and he's only paid me like thirty dollars, so it's a sticky situation 'cause he owes me money, but he my patna and then if that wasn't bad enough, like two or three months ago I lent his brother my scale. That was stupid 'cause I wasn't cool with him like that...stupid move. Now I don't really trust no one no more.

-Irv

From The Beat: It's hard to feel sympathy for a person when they're engaged themselves in negative activities, such as dealing, and someone treats them in a negative way. But aside from that even, your friend gave you a place to stay when you had nowhere to go, and that's worth a lot. Sometimes we hold monetary value higher than anything else, and let money get in the way of friendships that in the end mean more.

Getting Out Soon

What up, Beat — this yo' boy, Lil' Sam, and I am coming out of max unit. I am just telling y'all that I hope I am getting out.

My lawyer came today and told me that I might be getting out to go to LA and be out there for a year, and my lawyer said the people from LA supposed to come see me next week or the week after that. So I hope these people will accept me in their program.

My last court day is the twenty-first of November this year. So peace out, Beat — this is yo' boy, Lil' Sam! God bless everybody.

-Lil' Sam

From The Beat: Congratulations on the prospect of getting out of max unit and going off to a group placement. A lot of people on the unit would give almost anything to trade places with you and dream of getting out soon. Do a good program and drop us a line from time to time to let us know how you're feeling. God bless.

Menace To Society

Menace to society reminds me of all the older homies that I grew up with. When I was little I never hung out with no one my age and all of the homeboys were messing with methamphetamines, and always doing something crazy. Almost all of them made the paper, many making front page, so the term is nothing new to me, I grew up with it practically...kinda close to home.

-Irv

From The Beat: But does the term in your mind mean something positive or negative? The way you talk about your older homies almost sounds like a glorification of their lifestyle, but it doesn't sound like they were making front page news for any heroic deeds. We hope you don't allow yourself to be influenced by people just because they're older and seem cool—it always appears to be more glamorous than it is when we're young and impressionable.

In Juvy

Today, I'm supposed to be at a party, but I'm in Juvy with all the girls, but naw. I hope I get out tomorrow. I would come back to Juvy again.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: If you say you're going to come back to Juvy again, then why should you even be released? Are you enjoying your stay in Juvy that much? Bro', you got things seriously twisted. We hope this piece was a joke because we hope you're not serious, and if it was joke, it was a bad one!

Peep This

What it do. This Lil' Y, sittin', waiting for a PO to come and talk to me about my situation. I been stressing in this unit. I be doin' good but they never let me work.

I'm tryna go home man, but check it out, everybody wanna bang a click a gang and say what they run, but the government is the mob with little gangs under the' belt. The police bang they squad too. OPD, FBI they can take over any hood but they got us jukin' and cookin' for them. They run shhhh and can run us out.

Alright, keep it real if anything.

-Lil Y

From The Beat: Wow, it sounds like you have a lot of analytical thinking going on in your head—like your really dissecting the reality you live and coming to some heavy conclusions. We wonder why a person with such a sharp mind would get caught up in the game that destroys so many lives...we know it's complicated, maybe you can tell us about it in your next piece, and we know you'll think about it.

What I Miss

I miss the days I was able to do what I wanted to do before I got caught up in the system. Now I'm on probation and they can take me to jail for anything that's a violation. But it's good, I'm gonna bounce like it's nothing. I also miss my dead patnas, and my big patnas that's in jail, but the days not gone never be the same without my ninjas.

-Lil' Ronta

From The Beat: Everything in this piece you wrote seems to say that you need to choose a different path. That's the only way you'll get yourself out of the system and back in control of your life, and probably the only way you can live a life different from those of your patnas who are in jail or gone forever. We know it's hard, but we also know it's worth it. Good luck to you.

The Girls Up In Here

i respect your beauty
that i can't see
it takes women like you
to recognize me
tee aych you gee
you love the way
we shake our dreads
you love the way
we paint tips
this love
gets to your head
but all my love
goes to you
even if this bit i'm sayin'
ain't even close to true
but it's good enough for you
'cause you love it anyway
and me and my ninjas
could pull you any day
but i still love you anyway

-Andre

From The Beat: This sort of female bashing is as ugly as police smashing on the face of a young thug while filling his pockets up with drugs to make a case. What we're trying to say about the game you play is this: What goes down comes around and — ain't karma a ...! Well, to put it another way: God don't like ugly, so you pay for what you get. Your game ain't all that wet, so stop flossing it in The Beat. Can't you see it's this POV that put shackles on your feet? T-H-U-G L-I-F-E? The Hate yoU Give Like Illness Finishes Everyone! See, not only the girls you use and the knocks you abuse, but your own self most especially gets misused. But when you're ready to listen, you can liberate yourself from a system that harvests those afflicted with your sadly twisted (so-called player's but really a hater's), distorted perspective. Truth's misrepresentation leads to hospitals, death and incarceration unless you take a wake-up call from the street mentality, wake up from a thug's hallucinatory dream of reality.

Our Deepest Fear

What is it Beat, this ya boy Young M coming at you straight from Juvenile Hall. I went to court today and I got released and then my social worker was like "I can't pick you up but I will pick you up at 9:00 am (tomorrow)," so I'm glad.

Well I'm writing something that I wrote a year ago. Here it goes.

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine as children do. We were born to make, manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us, it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, out presence automatically liberates others.

-Young M

From The Beat: This is a great time to talk about plagiarism. Plagiarism means using someone else's ideas or words without giving them credit—it's basically stealing intellectual or artistic material and using it as though it were ours. It's not an ethical thing to do, and it's also illegal. It is always okay to reference someone else's material, and is a huge compliment to the original author/artist to do so, but we always have to cite them (meaning we have to say who originally said it and make it clear that we are quoting or paraphrasing). So we'll help you out and tell the readers that the second paragraph of this piece is from Marianne Williamson's A Return To Love: Reflections on the Principals of A Course in Miracles. We're glad the passage speaks to you; next time you can quote it.

Home Soon

What's up, Beat! This yo' boy, Lil' Tb, and I'm writing to tell all to keep it solid, do your program and go home free! Stay out of trouble and we will all be home soon. They gon' free us, or we gon' free ourselves!

-Lil' Tb

From The Beat: Whether or not you're released, it's up to you to free yourself mentally from the disease that makes you (yesterday, today and tomorrow) the system's slave (to sorrow).

Jumped In

If you were to get jumped into a gang and you wanted to get out you wouldn't be able to get out, well you would be able to but it wouldn't be as easy as if you lent your friend.....to be continued.

-Adrianna

From The Beat: This is very interesting. We would like you to continue this, because it sounds like a very difficult choice to make and a very difficult decision to make. Do you mean you had to get someone else to agree to join in order to be released from the gang?

Consequences

Responsibilities are part of life and sometimes things happen. If you don't handle them, that's where consequences come in. Feel me, I chose to get with a girl, and now I have a child. It changed my life completely around. From drug dealin' to a straight A+ student on tha' real.

Don't get me wrong though, 'cause I'll still bust yo' ass, no playin'. But when it's time to handle business leave all that fake shhh behind and step yo' game up. Fast.

-Lil' Josh

From The Beat: It's funny though, because that consequence – your child – is also the thing that made you start getting your life together. If you could do it over again, would you make a different decision?

Lent X-Box

this one time, like two years ago
i lent this x-box game to some girl
and she never gave it back
i really liked that game
and my lil' bro' was mad at me
because she had his favorite game
so to make it up to him
i had to buy the game again

-Anonymous

From The Beat: A man of such generosity of spirit deserves to have his name at the end of his piece so others can hear it. But then in a community of selfishness and greed, maybe selfless generosity gets mistaken for being weak. Oh well, we admire the size of your heart and the strength of your spirit.

I Write Because...

Man, I write because it helps me express myself without having to use actual words. Sometimes I be hella mad because I feel the staff be doin' some faulty things, and I can't do nothin' about it, so I just write to myself to say how I feel.

On the other hand I write to communicate with my family and friends, so that's the reason I do it.

-Outta Pocket

From The Beat: It's good to hear that you're even managing to use writing as "anger management". Do you think it would work if you tried to do that same thing on the outs?

Just Part of the Program

I write because I ain't got nothin' to do. I don't really like The Beat Within, it's just part of the Juvenile Hall Program. It's better than being in my cell.

-Hh.

From The Beat: We thank you for being honest – that's the most important quality in a writer or in a person. But we do have to say this – your writing these past few weeks has been pretty good, so we're glad to have you in our pages even if you're not thrilled to be there. Now all you need is a new nickname so we don't keep having to call you Hh.

Deep Down On the Inside

It makes me angry deep down in the side when I come here, 'cause all I see through out the day is the four white walls around me, while other things are running through my mind. Like today is Halloween and I'm locked up and since I've been in my room, all I I've thought of was what I would be doin' right now if I was out.

I know truly in my mind that I'm not missin' out on nothin', but every so often I wish I was out, just because I know this isn't the place to be; looking out my window, up at the threes, picturing every moment of being outside of these walls. Well I have to get use to it, 'cause next Halloween I will be locked up so for all you people that are going home or to placements, pimp that shhh 'cause beyond locked odors ain't it no more.

-Tank

From The Beat: We are sorry to see you back as well, even though of course we welcome your writing back in The Beat. Now are you going to put your terrific storytelling skills to use to tell us what happened to bring you back to these four dark walls?

Something I Wish I Never Lent

There was one thing that I regret lending to someone — and that is my freedom, to the judge! That's all I can think of that I wish I'd never lent, because that is what's most important to me — my freedom!

-Young B

From The Beat: If your freedom were hanging by a thread, and you could be free if you gave up banging and instead went to school everyday and took a part-time job to make some pay — would you be willing be willing to quit and go legit? Just wondering.

Menace to the Hood

What's up Beat and Beat readers? This the homeboy Lil' Mocos from Hayward. The judge and the DA told me that I was being "detained" because I'm a "monster" and a "menace to society" — shhh! What can I say? I'm not ashamed of what I do. I'm just a product of the hood environment.

-Lil' Mocos

From The Beat: It seems to take centuries for civilized people slowly to come to realize that punishment and the threat thereof, will not stop poor people surrounded by wealth from taking a share by any means necessary. Society can lock you up, but there are plenty coming up to take your place as soon as you're missed. The need for self-respect motivates more powerfully than threats of retributive justice, and "raggedy" is a worse punishment than a criminal record in the hood — unfortunately, crime and poverty reinforce each other till the pressure lands you in jail or the dirt; and more bangers come up to put in work.

Anything is Possible.

What's really good though, Beat Within?

This yo' boy The Tongan and I have been truly blessed. All the waiting pan and suffering is now coming to an end. I thought I would never get out, for being charged with attempted murder, but keeping up the faith and help from my parents. I have convinced the judge to give me a second chance.

-The Tongan

From The Beat: Congratulations on your narrow escape. This is great news if you used the opportunity to better your life, not set your life of for failure.

Jail

People go and stay for a day, get happy.
Ain't nothing happy about jail.
Seems like people will get loose
like they been ran up in
some high power talking about what they got and be lying
about they did but me I be cool and wait till I get out,
while I'm gonna stay fighting and getting phat to all you.
Peace keep it real.

-A Kid

From The Beat: There's a lot of talk in jail. Don't get caught in the drama. Fights can only dig a deeper hole.

Top Citizen

Well, I don't know what to talk about but yeah, they got me on top citizen and workin' and shhh. It's coo'. The only part I don't like is when I work in the morning, I guess though, it's better being out of my room.

-Mike Jonez

From The Beat: Congratulations on making Top Citizen. A lot of people, when they're facing the kind of challenges and stresses you have to deal with, they just give up on themselves. But instead of doing that, you went and did the best you could for yourself and carved out a light spot in a dark place. That's inspiring.

i go stupid

i'm in the club with no i d
if yo' boy had prescription lenses
man he still couldn't see me
'cause i be on the av' holdin' it down

-Bates

From The Beat: You fell in love with your street credentials, but now you see the game had you goin' mental — 'cause you traded away your freedom for a false code you believed in.

Beat Within

what's up,
this young rick in alameda
county juvenile hall
chilling —
waiting for the 'y'
what's up
to all readin'
i'm still here

-Young Ricky

From The Beat: Across the chasm of where and how you grew up, and what we wish for you, are worlds of space and time. If only you could imagine yourself succeeding without crime, you could be using instead of just passing your time.

I Write Because ....

When I feel stressed I'm able to write about my feelings and what's on my mind, and write to my family to see how they are doing and tell them how I'm doing and stuff.

-Lil' Man Man

From The Beat: We love to hear about what's happening in your family, there are still many chapters left to be written in the Man Man story.

State of Mind

I write because of my life and childhood and my state of mind 'cause I really going through a lot of things right now that's really putting a hole in my chest. It's my brother and my cousin, 'cause I know they have a hole in their chests too 'cause what they are looking forward to and what they left behind: a family that loves them. And I know that disturbs them.

The main thing I'm thinking about is days I'm in here like today is Halloween even though it's the devil's day but it feels good to be out with your family and trick or treat. But it's good now. I know it's not a game.

So next time I got to stay on my toes like a ballerina. So Beat next time is good but now I got to go. Keep yo' head up. I love you, y'all just let Jesus take care of that and y'all be cool.

-Baby T

From The Beat: It's not only bullets that put a hole in a man's chest, but also loss of loved ones or loss of freedom. You've tapped into a great metaphor and we hope you keep writing until the hole in your chest fills back up.

RIP Cell

Cell bra, I'm still up in here tryin' to get through all this weight on my shoulder, but I'm 'bout to get through this, trust that. But I'm gonna see you when I see you. Love you ninja.

-Lil Naud

From The Beat: It's a big weight you carry, but it's also a weight we know you can carry. Do you believe that?

Love What?

you love my style
and my smile
the way i smell
like a black and mild
but you're always on the bus
fools like you get flu's
and they never get trust
but i'm ya boy
and you're my girl
but like my fav' necklace
you're just a fine pearl

-Andre

From The Beat: For all its wit and nerve, this poem is plain ugly. And while your words aim smugly to hurt the pride of your girl, you'll be the one to discover just how cold it gets in your cruel world. When you're down and out, getting kicked about by the one whose love you spurned, you'll say you knew not to trust, but in reality it's just what you earned — what a playa's game deserved.

What's A Menace To Society?

I've never been called a menace to society, but I've been called something similar to it. I've been called a "monster" and a "rat-pack." When I'm on the street, the police treat me like I murdered somebody, especially when you wear a black hoodie.

-Twin

From The Beat: We're sorry to hear that people would even dare call you names because who are they to judge you? Do you have any idea why people would call you these names? If you saw yourself walking down the street, what kind of a first impression would you come across with about yourself?

Gettin' Out

I write because it ain't shhh to do and I know if I sit there it won't be cool.
Sometimes I can express my feelings and show how and what I think.
When I get out it ain't gon' be no writing 'cause I'm go be up out this joint and gettin' my money.

-Jenkins

From The Beat: Sounds to us like you will only be free for a minute, given you will put yourself right back on the block aka the hot spot. Be safe out there, and remember money isn't the only thing you need. You need freedom too.

Stolen Playstation

One time I let my uncle borrow my Playstation, like in 1997 and like a few months later I went to his house and my shhh got stolen. Then several years ago on Christmas I had hella games on PS2 and somebody stole ma' games.

-Issaac

From The Beat: That sucks! We hope you didn't get too upset about those material things, though we understand how frustrating that is.

Menace To Society

Me and my gorillas real menaces'. For those who know me and my squad, y'all already know what time it is, and it ain't 10:30. I mean; not to brag, but I am what I am. I think judges and DA's judge us, meaning juveniles, too quick. A person can do one thing, then he a menace to society. That's not the point. The point is, I'm a menace, my squad a menace, and I hope we make it before y'all take it.

-Stank

From The Beat: Make it where? What is your point? For us who are not in the know, what time is it? Also, what kind of a person are you? Although you might feel that juveniles are judged "too quick," if one never places themselves in that position in which one has to stand in front of a judge and be judged, then one has nothing to worry about. Forget what people say, unless what they are saying is the truth and you're not trying to accept it.

Another Lost

What's another thing that I lost is my grandma and grandpa and I lost them because a gun and some people that said things to my grandpa, so after that, my life changed, so that's what I lost that I never got back.

-Jesus

From The Beat: We're sorry to hear that your grandparents went out in such a violent way. Face it; we're all gonna go someday, but to go out like your grandparents did is not the way to go. Even though you'll never see them again physically, their memory and spirit is still alive in you. How did your life change after their death: For better or worse? If your grandparents were still alive, what do you think they would feel about you being behind bars?

Took My Bike

I lent my OG patna a bike and he never returned it back. He said he lost it, but I don't believe him. That ninja went bad on me. That's why me and him ain't cool. When I see him, it's on. I'm 'bout to do what I do and get at OG and whoop him when I see him. It's good. I'm gonna catch him slippin' and I'mma kick his head in.

-Lil' R

From The Beat: We're sorry to hear what this "OG" did to you, but we're even sorrier that we had to read what you plan on doing once you get back on the outs. You should just leave your relationship with him as is: You ain't cool with him. That bike can be replaced, but at least now you know what kind of person he is and know he can't be trusted. We advice you not to seek revenge against this OG because you never know what this O.G. might be carrying on him at the moment you decide to carry out your revenge. We'd hate to read an RIP piece dedicated to you all because of a stupid bike. Think about what we're telling you before its too late.

I Am A Menace To Society

I am a menace to society and can't figure out why? It's like, I'm a bad person and do bad crimes, but I'm really not, and some think I'm pretty cool until they see that big thang that they charged me fo', fool.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: If you honestly can't comprehend why people might view you as a menace to society, then we strongly advice you to seek professional help immediately. Could it have something to do with you committing bad crimes like that "big thang" you're boasting about in your piece? May we suggest doing the opposite of what you normally do? Do you feel it's justified that these people feel this way? Why or why not?

Menace To Society

One day while at my grandparents' house while I was smoking a 'port. My brother's girlfriend's mom came to my grandparents' house with my brother's girlfriend and I was cleaning up something I spilt and I said "Eff this shhh. I ain't cleanin' up." So then she said I have foul mouth and she just out of nowhere called me a menace to society just like that.

People stress over two days when brothers do two years. That's what got me trippin'.

-Lil' Dilil

From The Beat: True, some people trip off words, though is there more to the story as to why she gave you such a title? Most fights start because of words. And judgments come from words. But maybe she was trippin' off you refusing to clean, not just your foul mouth? If you don't clean up one mess, you end up cleaning up another bigger one.

What I Lost.....

What I lost is all the days that I have been in Juvenile Hall. I lost my hat trying to bring it back. That means that I was trying to clean it and make it look good, but I made it look bad.

-Richard

From The Beat: We hope that even though you're behind bars, you try to make the most out of everyday. Why not fill your head with knowledge so when you're back on the outs, you're ready for whatever confronts you? At least you're doing something productive with your time. What kind of a hat was the one you lost? Are there any stories you have behind the hat you lost that you can share with us?

An Old Girlfriend I Had

Why you don't trust me?
Why you say you love me?
Why you always get mad?
Why you always say I call you back?
Why you act funny?
Why you choose your friends first?
Why you always thinking wrong?
Why you think I am mad?
Why you like having sex a lot?
Why you be calling me every sec?
Why you say all them words and you don't mean it?
Do you care?
Do you always act the way you do?

-Jamari

From The Beat: That's a powerful list of questions that illustrates how confusing relationships are.

Education

If could get back all my time that I spent in jail and if I could go back, I would go to school and try to make it out the 'hood and try to send my young life the right way, so I won't end up dead, and do the right thang, show the little brothers and sisters to get their education.

-Keandre

From The Beat: Keandre, you come across in your piece as if you're a grandpa! What do you mean you would try to send your life the right way? There is still plenty of time for you to do so because you have barely started to live! What do you feel prevents you from going the right route? If this is what you truly would like for yourself, then we suggest you go for it. Forget what other people think or what people call you. The only thing that should ever really matter is that you're happy with yourself and where your life is headed. Are you happy with the person you are and where your life is headed right now?

I Lost...

What I lost that I can't get back is my 15th birthday in here, locked up, and me feeling so mad. It's sad to be in here for your birthday in the Hall, so that's what I lost that I can't get back.

-Jesus

From The Beat: Who is to blame for you spending your 15th birthday behind bars? Is this your first time being behind bars? Although you may not be aware of it right now, but you may have given yourself the best present that anyone could have given you for your birthday this year, and that's this experience. We hope this experience has taught you that doing what's wrong is not going to get you far in life. Even though you weren't able to celebrate your 15th birthday the way you would have liked, what you can do is make sure you don't spend any future birthdays behind bars.

Jumped In

If you were to get jumped into a gang and you wanted to get out you wouldn't be able to get out,well you would be able to but it wouldn't be as easy as if you lent your friend.....to be continued.

-Adrianna

From The Beat: This is very interesting. We would like you to continue this, because it sounds like a very difficult choice to make and a very difficult decision to make. Do you mean you had to get someone else to agree to join in order to be released from the gang?

Ready

I just want to write about how I'm happy to get a release. I think I'm ready mentally to turn my life around.

-Rochelle

From The Beat: We've heard it in your voice, and we hope the people in your life support your decision.

Feeding A Fiend

What it do, Beat! Man, I remember when I lent my ninja dub, 'cause he said he needed it. So you know it ain't nothing; but even though I knew my patna was on crystal, I didn't know he was gonna use it for that. But, you know, he's ya ninja and you suppose to let him know what's up! So I told him, and he told me he was gonna pay me back. Ever since that day I never saw him, and after a while, he moved.

-Lolo

From The Beat: In the future, if you now your patna is on crystal, then you know that's what he'll spend his money on. After a while it's not even like he's making the decisions anymore, his addiction is — if you're supposed to let him know what's up, let him know that it's nothing to mess with, and don't feed his habit with drugs or money.

Favorite Movie Plot

martin Lawrence pretends to be miles
as he tries to find the diamond
after he gets out of jail for robbery
and he finds out the place
where miles hid the diamond
it was police station
miles was not a cop but a robber
so he gets mad about where it's hid
he thinks miles picked the wrong place to
'cause he can't get a diamond in police station
so he decides to go get a fake badge
so he can enter the station to get diamond

-Dwan

From The Beat: Sounds like a plot with lots of twists and turns, and we know Martin Lawrence makes you laugh when he gets frustrated and mad. Did you see the stand-up comedy routine he did about his addiction to cocaine and his rehab? Funny, but it teaches, too. It's on video.

Here In Juvenile Hall

What's up, Beat? How's life been treating you? This is Loun from Hayward, California, writing you from 2200 Fairmont Drive, San Leandro, California, 94578 — Alameda County Juvenile Hall aka 150 Crew. I want to inform everyone in the United States of America, that I have court tomorrow.

I don't believe I have to go, because they told my mom that she don't have to show up for my court date. I know what's going to happen to me, but the district attorney wants me to stay here until some time in January. I also want to tell everyone in my country, the United States of America, that I'm going to be eighteen very soon — so the judge might give me a straight release off probation.

Well, that's all I have to say today — sitting here in a United States of America juvenile hall.

-Loun

From The Beat: Waiting for that court date can be hard on the nerves, and no less so just because you carry the hope of a straight release. We just want to warn you not to get yourself too upset if you don't walk free out of the courtroom. Sometimes getting your hopes up can be the worst thing you can do to yourself, at least if you're not ready to be disappointed.

Yo!

Yo', what's good with you? This me, mayne, yo' boy from Oakland. I'm just right here writing, missing my family right here, waiting to get out of here, and do what I gotta do out in the outsides.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: We like your attitude! Can you share with us what you mean when you mentioned in your piece that you're going to do what you gotta do out on the outsides? We hope that when you get out, you stay out!

To the Army

This is Soldier Boy writing you from juvenile hall, and I have decided this is my last juvenile hall. I'm going to be eighteen soon, and I'm probably going into the army when I get out. That's what my brother did when he turned eighteen. And I also want to fight in the war for my country.

-Soldier Boy

From The Beat: We wouldn't wish this war on anyone, but we admire your desire to straighten out your life and give something back to your country.

Menace To Society

This is a thing we read all the time in The Beat. Many of you write how angry it makes you when you hear your own description.

-Keepin' It Real

From The Beat: We wish you would have attached your name to this piece and decided to scribble down a couple more lines on this topic because you were on a roll! Yes, unfortunately, almost every contributor to The Beat would be looked down upon as a "menace" by the majority of society. However, you also made a very interesting point in your piece when you mentioned that some of our very own contributors get upset when they read what other people think of them. That is very hypocritical. Why do you feel some of our contributors in The Beat get upset when they are criticized for the things they boast about?

Trust Nobody

Well yeah, ma'am, I'm hella mad, It's Halloween today. Man this is my second Halloween in this shhh. But yeah, I'm right here sittin' on the couch.

I just got done talkin' to my lil' mamaz.

Damn, I swear, every time I talk to her, she always starts cryin'. I be like damn, be strong. But yeah, the only time I get to see her is when I go to court. That shhh be hella messed up. I be like damn, for reals...

Man sometimes I be like wishin' I can go back to the situation that caused me to be in here. To not be where I was.

I swear you can't even trust no female in this world. The devil is always all over the place. That's all for now.

-Mike Jonez

From The Beat: We feel you on these phone calls being stressful. To know that the phone is all you have to connect you with someone you love, and there's always so much to say, too much to fit in one short call. Are letters easier? With letters you have time to think about what you're going to say, plus you can read them over and over again and really think on what they mean....

The Lent

I remember I lent my jeans to my god-bra. He lives in San Francisco and told me that he would give em' to me in two weeks. Since that's my bra I wasn't trippin' off of it.

A month later, I kept askin' for my jeans and every time I went over his house he would say, "pops took em to the cleaners" or "they at my momma's house bra."

Ever since then I ain't let him borrow nothin' of mine. But I lent out hella stuff and ain't got it back, but most of time it was from family, not friends.

Only one time I was talked into it, it was when my cousin stole his daddy's drank from behind the bar and he was about to go to his mom's house to stay. He asked me for my black big coat and I let him use it. This was about two months ago and I still haven't got it back. But when I get out I'ma go straight to his house to get it.

-Lil' Pat

From The Beat: We hope you get your coat back and maybe down the road your jeans, or even better a new pair of jeans.

I Write Because

i write because it makes me
feel a lot better to let out
all my feeling on paper
i love to let everyone hear
about my problems so that
they know they aren't so bad

-Crystal

From The Beat: And isn't it a gift when after writing, we realize that our problems are not so bad that we can't accept responsibility and deal with them, one day at a time.

Getting Out

Hey Beat readers, how's it doing? I know you all are going through the same thing that I'm going through right now. So let's cut to the chase — I'm getting out either to a group home, Camp, or out on EM.

I hope that I get out — and be out for Christmas and New Year's Eve! And for my birthday next month, twenty-nine days from now. But I hope for everyone of you to get out and not go to the Y, too. Hey, but look at the good side, even if you do, you're going to see the light of the day once again.

-Teddy Bear

From The Beat: You're good on the desiring freedom for yourself and others, which is a good thing. But what are you willing to change to make sure that freedom won't come and go as fast as a roving sideshow? 'Cause don't change and it'll end up the same.

Camp Bound

What's up, Beat! This is Big Will from Hayward. To start off, I want to give my utmost respect to my loved ones. Now down to business: Well, I've been here at Camp for five months now. I've been doing an all right program, but I could do better.

When I first got here, I felt like running. But after I started going home, I said to myself, "This program is too easy to run!" The only big problems I've been through here, was a fight and a refused pee-test. As far as everything else, it's been coo'. I mean, I was one of the people here that had to wait longer to go home on a home pass because of my case, but now it's coo'.

This program has gotten easier and easier. I think that the people that run are stupid! Also, the main reason I'm staying and doing this program is because of my mom and my family. I also want to be out when my brothers get out, so I could throw a party for them! Well, Beat, I'm out till next time. All right then — late.

-Big Will

From The Beat: We've watched you show self-restraint and good sense over these months that have seen you go from maximum security in the Hall to this "easy program" at Camp Sweeney. And, frankly, we're proud of you for sticking it out at Camp for the sake of your mother and family — and we don't mean that to sound patronizing in the least. We've written before that you are a leader, whether you want to admit it or not, and we appreciate your testimony here about the stupidity of running from Camp, not because we think the system's a good thing but because we also think it is stupid and self-destructive in ninety-nine out of a hundred cases — and even in the exceptional cases, it's still a set-up to stay stuck in the mind set of doing "what I want when I want", which leads to more jails, institutions and deaths. We just hope you can carry some of this wisdom out with you after your release. If you can be a "worker" at Camp, why not get a job out there and get paid for your work? You're less likely to do stupid things yourself if your pockets aren't empty; plus, as the saying goes, "Idle hands are the devil's workshop." Make your mother happy, show her you can be more than just another gangster on his way to breaking his mother's heart.

Menace To Society

In my mind, I think a menace to society is someone that is ruthless, or a threat to the society. Someone that puts an effect on society and changes for good or bad.

I don't label myself as a menace to society in a way of being rich, like getting money or some real estate agent, make a 40 million a year on some just mouth picks that I got, and get money from the little females.

-Lil' J

From The Beat: Money But what matters isn't how much you have, it's two things: One, how you earn it. Do you earn it by hurting other people, putting yourself or the people you love in danger? If so, that money is cursed. Two. What do you do with it. Do you spend that money on gold and luxury? Or do you spend it on your education and your children's education, on what matters on what matters.

This Life

This be yo' boy up here at Camp Wilmont Sweeney. Well, I want to write about how Asian gangs are on the rise in California, like around twenty-five thousand in the vicinity of Los Angeles and another forty thousand in northern California.

During the last ten years, these number have been growing dramatically. Well, for those who don't know, the "Triads" are an underground mafia/gangster type organization, but on the down-low they are very well connected. They drive around collecting extortion money, gambling "taxes", and whore-house "tax" — and that's all the five-oh knows about them. So that's all I'm going to put out there.

Well, that's all I have for right now. Peace to The Beat Within.

-Mien

From The Beat: We do appreciate your lacing us up on this aspect of Asian gangs, and yeah, we're impressed with your numbers (although we cut that out of the piece) — though it fills us with dread not only for their rivals but for the youngsters being brought into their ranks — and the young women being forced (sometimes sold by their parents who imagine they're coming to America to be nannies, au pairs and housekeepers) into prostitution and treated like slaves! Nor is it Asian pride when one Asian gang goes to war with another, it's just the same senseless warfare taking hundreds and thousands of young lives (black, brown, yellow and even white) across the state — and filling state and federal prisons with lifers destined to be part of a cheap labor force with no rights (aka neo-slavery) working for far less than minimum wage. It's time to graduate from the street and the gang, so you can live the more or less normal life of a free man, otherwise odds are great you will be in a prison yard in a few plus years!

Can't Trust

Something I can really never give back is my trust because I trusted someone I really thought was a true friend and since I've never really had a lot of friends. I really didn't bother too look for any the true friends. I only had my best friend Pookie, who I been knowing since I was four and my family too. I had no problem nor experiences of mistrusting everybody! We told each other everything... well we didn't tell, we wrote and we also talked and we come to find out we went with the same group of boys they were actually a gang and we loved them so much! And of course she stabbed me in my back.

-Britoria

From The Beat: How did she stab you in the back? And if you were to put yourself in her shoes, what would her side of the story be?

Thoughts From My Head

ninjas be all they can be where I'm from
from playing basketball to shooting big guns
one day i hope god just listen' to what i be saying
at night asking for forgiveness on my knees praying
i'm tryin'a do good because i got young ones looking up to me
so i got to be a positive ro' model for my younger siblings
actin' a ass, going dumb on the block were i'm at
sittin' on the steps shooting dice, selling crack

-Lil' Larry

From The Beat: In one sense, it's so easy to keep living that life of acting a fool — shooting dice, selling crack and looking cool. On the other hand, it will lead you to becoming an old, angry, bitter man, who did no one any good 'cause he just couldn't take a stand. In and out of jail, posted out on bail, 'cause it was so easy to continue to sell instead of getting an education and a job

Just to See Their Faces

I was in my room, just got these letters and some pictures, and I was looking at the pictures and they were pictures of my brothers and that are locked up.

It put a smile on my face to see their faces, not in person, but it still made me feel good to see their faces, 'cause it brings a lot of good memories in my head that we did together, and when we all get out, we're going to do it big like we never did, before.

Got to go, but not for long.

-Lil' Vee

From The Beat: It's a trip how just a photo, a letter, can be like a lifeline to bring us joy. And no matter what the future may hold for you, these photos are about who you are, where you've been, and who loves you. We like to hear you say you will do it big, because God knows you deserve a big life. But we know that in the past, doing it big has meant all sorts of dangerous and reckless acts that have hurt you and the people you love in many ways. Our challenge to you, then, is to do it big for real: Live a life that increases your freedom, takes you out of the neighborhood. Can you see yourself traveling around the world, taking pictures to send your loved ones? Can you see yourself raising a family, taking pictures of your children to send your loved ones? What would a photo album of your future look like?

First Home Pass

What's up Beat! This Lil' Boxer coming at you from Camp. Well, first off I want to send my love and respect to all doing time. Keep yo' heads up! This ain't nothin'. I also want to congratulate J-Mac for getting through this program and getting released!

Now to the home pass — this Saturday I get my first home pass. But this is a special home pass, 'cause this weekend is a holiday. So I get Saturday and Sunday to kick it with mi familia and folks. I am 'bout to have hella fun this weekend!

Oh yeah, to those coming up here — this Camp is hella easy! Just do your program, don't trip 'bout going home, and before you know it, you'll be home with you familia!

-Lil' Boxer

From The Beat: We appreciate your words of encouragement to those coming up to Camp as well as those who can expect to be locked up (wherever) longer than that. And yeah, that first home pass is special. But now, remember that there will be a second one the very next week if you don't catch a dirty or come back late or miss your phone call or whatever. Have fun but use good judgment. Really it's a test to see how well you handle freedom, and it says a lot about whether you'll stay out after your release.

Favorite Actors and Movies

martin lawrence, ron schlesinger,
hugh jackson, the wayans brothers
— blue streak, lie between this line,
the animal, scream, benchwarmer, x-men

-Dwan

From The Beat: Don't know any Ron Schlesinger. Did we mess up the name totally? What movies has he been in? Ain't film great!

Free Hitta

most solid ninjas don't need
to be caged up like no animal
but i think god have to put the solid ones
down fo' a minute to slow ninjas down
most of the time it be for the better
god knows what better for us

-Jonnie

From The Beat: You've got to get solid with God not the mob. He doesn't want you to slow your roll but turn your life around on the whole. This is a chance for your mind to slow down and think through the things you used to do. God wants to see a new you, and that's what will make your life better, too. It's up to you.

This Camp Program Is Easy

I might get out in one month, and I hope I do! But most important of all, I would like to stand out with all of my homeboys — to stay strong! Because I'm still going to see them out there in the community. And I hope that they don't run from Camp, because it's an easy program to do. (How does my homeboy think I don't know?)

But also of utmost importance, I would like to know if I could send a message out to all in the Hall that now are coming to Camp, because I would like them to know that this is easy program — so if you're reading this, don't think of running! Because you got a family out there who cares about you. So if you come to Camp, take care and do your time.

-Lil Chuky

From The Beat: That's some pretty good advice about not running. Sometimes it seems like most that run have already made up their minds to do it before they even get to Camp, and it's a stupid mistake — but too many don't wait around to see how easy it is to do a good program and get released (with no warrant to bring you back to the Hall as soon as you're identified). But now, as to standing out with all the homeboys to show strength, that's child's play. Pursue your high school degree (or GED), get a job, bring home a paycheck, make your community and family stronger by being that male role model youngsters need to see.

Halloween

Man, it's Halloween and I'm in the Halls! But its good, 'cause a ninja finna get out tomorrow and do it big. Feel me? I guess I'm in here for a reason right now, 'cause I know it's going down right now out there — so I ain't really tryin'a be down for Halloween. I'm getting out tomorrow!

-Lil' Ham

From The Beat: Hope you see this. 'Cause you got Halloween scoped. But it's still going down in the street, so get to school to get your high school degree and find yourself an after-school j-o-b.

Borrowed

About six months ago I lent my life to a man who didn't care at all about me. I ran away from my home and a father who has done nothing but love me. I gave my life to a man who was heartless and manipulative. I could have and should have lost my life due to the way this man treated me I was beaten and held against my will. That half a year is precious time that I'll never get back. All because I was blinded by what I thought of as love, but he thought of as lust. But as I look back on the time that was sadly lost, I wouldn't change a thing. The experience has taught me a lot and made me a more intelligent female. I know that I won't ever put myself in an abusive relationship again. So the painful experience was worth it?

-Vanessa

From The Beat: We're so sorry that you had to go through this terrible experience, but very glad that you feel you learned an important lesson from it and that it made you see your worth and understand what you deserve. How will you know in the future who to trust? How will you test the waters? What will guide you?

Baby Milk and Big Wheels

I wish that I wouldn't have lent my money to a stripper. I can't ever get it back. Now it's somewhere going on baby milk and big wheels.

-Mannie

From The Beat: We're sorry you lost your money. But hey take a look at the bright side. Somewhere out there there might be a baby who has you to thank for his last meal!

I Love Lanaya

I write when I want to express myself and let what's on my mind out in some way. What I've been holding in I can just get it out on a piece of paper. So let me express myself: First off, I've been thinking a lot about what the hell I'm doin' in this place when I got a baby at home. What I was thinking I really don't know. I always told my bra, don't pop pills and then I went out and popped a pill and got caught up in a robbery when I was suppose to be home with my baby.

Damn I'm sittin' in this bootsie ass place. When I get home I'm gonna do what I gotta do to stay home with my daughter. Also, the time I've been here I've been thinking a lot about Marcelluis. Like what would he say if he was still alive and I was in here. Or if he's really not gone and I'm gonna see him again. I always have flash backs of my bra and when we used to kick it at the old house I miss you Cell. I also think of my baby 24/7 I wish I hadn't make the mistake of committing robbery so I can be home with Lanaya. I feel hella bad. I can only see my baby three days a week. My mom said she be talking a lot now but I haven't had talk with her yet. R.I.P Cell. I love you Lanaya.

-Vanessa

From The Beat: That must be a terrible feeling to be separated from your baby girl. And it must fee even worse knowing that it was your own bad decision that took you away from her. But it sounds like you learned your lesson and know that it's not just hard on you, but even harder on her. Innocent little babies need there mammas love ALL of the time, not some of the time, while their mamma is locked up in jail. It gets worse when she's olde rand understands that her mamma thought it was a better idea to make a bad decision and go to jail than to be a good mother. So we're really relieved that you're making the decision now not to mess up Lanaya's happiness.

Your Birthday Suit

Your birthday suit has become something that's oh so fascinating to me
The way your breasts is so firm above your brown belly
The way your lips fit so perfectly on your face
And how I would love to have your warm body in my strong embrace
Those dark brown eyes that I love to stare into in the middle of the night
Are the same ones that I stare into and get hypnotized after we argue and fight
I love you so much and I'm wanting you now
While I'm reminiscing on the times I would whisper sweet nothings into your ear.

-Lil' D

From The Beat: You could bottle this kind of poetry up and sell it as cologne. We hope you like this girl as much as you want this girl, and in the meantime, while you're trying to figure it out, it's good to see you coming up with new and original ways to say your mind each week. Keep 'em coming (and keep 'em PG!)

Halloween

I wouldn't just direct these questions towards one period in my life. It would be very hard to because you lend something everyday. You give, make sacrifices, and risk something everyday. We make good and bad decisions that may change our life and thoughts for the rest of our lives. Our everyday actions determine where and what are the consequences. Well they do. My message is think before you act. Learn and experience as much as you can and if you have to make bad decisions, do it young.

-Arianna

From The Beat: What you're saying is true. We make sacrifices everyday, but sometimes we don't know what these sacrifices will be. For example, when one of you youngsters makes a decision to do something, whether its getting high, stealing something, getting in a fight, etc. you're not thinking you will sacrifice your freedom, but in fact you will if you get caught. If you sacrifice your freedom, then you can get caught in the cycle of the system for years. So one little error in judgment has huge consequences for you. Are there any times when it seemed like you didn't have a choice and you made a bad decision, but looking back, you wish you had been more cautious and aware of your own actions? If yes, it means you're on the right path to self-awareness

Menace

People have called me a menace to society before but I don't really take it personally or let it change my self esteem, because I know I've been a problem before but everyone can change and that's what I've decided to do and all that menace to society stuff don't matter and for those people that think it's cool they fools cause that criminal stuff gets old fast and maybe it's cool for a little while but it will get old and they gonna be wishing they had tried to do something else.

-Sugar

From The Beat: We certainly agree, but what was it that changed things for you? Or was it that society always had you mislabeled and you were just in the wrong place at the wrong time? Tell us about it.

My Baby Boy

I am in the hall, thinking about my baby boy. Like, man how can I stay out to take care of him, and how can I stop putting my girl through this pain coming in and out of the hall.

She tells me she cries at night because I am not around, and she can't hear my deep voice saying "I love you" and "Good night you"

-Dnuts

From The Beat: Separation is just one step away from desperation. But you are getting a second chance. Soon you will be with your girl and your son again. Now you have some time to figure out how to stay with her, for keeps.

Beat Within

I lent my freedom to the system, and time that I can never get back. I hurt a lot of family members and let down my broad by coming in and out of this unjust system.

The way that I'm gonna claim it back before it's too late, is stay out of trouble and stay away from negative people. I'm also gonna move out of state where my not knowing people will hopefully help.

-Vaedra

From The Beat: You feel remorse for the hurt you've caused others and the damage you've caused yourself — and that's a great start to the process of change. Moving out of state can help, too, as long as you take care of you, but if you slip into your old mind set, you'll find there are "negative people" everywhere.

Losing

What I lost that I can't get back is my birthday. It's on Nov. 10 and I got court right after that, but whatever. I'll have another one next year.

-Ignacio

From The Beat: Although you're spending your birthday behind bars, "Happy Birthday!" We also wish you nothing but the best on your court date. How would you have celebrated your birthday on the outs?

Because

I write because it helps me express my feelings – you know the feelings that separate me from everybody else.

-Lil' Maine

From The Beat: In 19 words, you say more about the power of writing than some people can do in thirty pages. Yes – you are unique, you travel your road alone, but writing is one way for you to bring together all of us on our roads. Thank you.

Second Week at Camp

What's up wit' it, Beat! This Tone from Mountain View. It's my second week here at Camp, but I've been away from home for about two months now.

When I first got here, the days was going by slow, but now I only got two more weeks till my day pass. I can't wait! The first thing I'm goin' to do, is be with my mom for a couple of hours.

Then I'll call all my homies from my hood and soak on a couple forty ouncers of Old English. I'll find out what's been going on in my hood, and we'll kick it till it's time for me to go back to Camp.

There's homies here and the time goes by fast. So, to all in the Hall that's' got big cases, keep yo' head up. Keep it solid. And I'm out.

-Anthony

From The Beat: It sounds like, given where you are, things are going pretty well for you. We appreciate your setting aside time to be with your mom, 'cause she's stood by you through this troubled time. And we know that just about everyone hits the block, drinks and kicks it with the homeboys — but we also know that just about everyone ends up coming back to lock up, too. If you keep repeating the same mistakes, you'll keep getting the same results. Isn't it time for a change?

My Girl

My girl
She's the baddest
Her smile lights up the room
I was surprised that she said, "Yes"
When I asked her to be my girl,
So I was happy
And she was, too
She's still my girl,
Even though I am in the Hall
She's faithful, too.

-Lil' Dom

From The Beat: We're glad that you have found someone whom you're comfortable with. Instead of spending your time in here, you should be spending your time with her on the outs. Do your time so you can make that happen.

I feel hella bad. I can only see my baby three days a week. My mom said she be talking a lot now but I haven't had talk with her yet

Don't Trust

I had lent a family member some money, because he was going through some trouble, and I said, "Here! Make sure you hit me back, brah."

He said, "Don't trip. In a couple of day, I got you."

So when I seen my brah in a couple of days, he said, "I got your money, but it's at the house."

And I said, "Let me take you there."

"I got to go to my uncle's house first and help him move."

So I said, "Brah, hit me up when you're done." After that I didn't hear from him at all. It had been two weeks when I seen him at a party, and I said, "What' up!"

He said, "Man, I spent yo' money. I had to pay something off."

I said nothing. I fought him. Then I cut from the party. I told him before I left, "Have my money tomorrow!"

He finally gave my money back, but he took too long — and he didn't call back. Don't trust nobody.

-Lil' Mess

From The Beat: It's true that loaning money, especially if you need and/or expect a timely repayment, is a good way to mess up a friendship. You generously loan your friend some money, and instead of getting gratitude, he avoids you and then resentfully pays you back as if you were taking money out of his pocket. It's weird and commonplace at the same time.

My Love

I lent my girl my love and she never gave it back and that ain't cool, so I will never lend a girl my love again, and that's what I lent, so if she asks me to lend her something, I will say, "No, I won't give it to you. If you don't want to have it, that's not right."

-Lil' Dre

From The Beat: We're sorry to hear that this girl betrayed your trust. However, you shouldn't allow this one incident to determine your perception of females. For ex: Just because a person is Latino, that doesn't mean that person is a gang-banger. Just because a person is black, that doesn't mean that person is a criminal, so just because this female betrayed you, that doesn't mean that all females will do the same to you. We hope that you have learned from this experience that if someone doesn't appreciate you the same way you appreciate them, then you shouldn't settle for this person regardless of how fine they are or what kind of body they have. What kind of relationship would you prefer to be in: One with someone who loves you the same way you love them or with someone that takes you for granted?

Dreaming of the Outs

What up, Beat! This Dreamer comin' at you from Camp. I went home last week for a HV (home visit), and now — I got restricted for two weeks! So I go home on November eighteenth.

Hella homies is getting released, and I can't wait till my time comes! Time be goin' hella fast up here — so I'm'a do these two weeks and get back on the outs. Well, got to wrap it up.

-Dreamer

From The Beat: Sorry we had to cut your RIP. Write a piece about Arturo, or you and Arturo, and we'll print it with RIP in the title as a memorial to your friend. As for Camp, stay patient, do a good program, and it will all be good. Then carry that attitude with you back on the outs.

Ninjas Say

Ninjas say that I'm gay, but I tell them that they got the game twisted! They called me gay, 'cause I got my tongue pierced. It ain't nothing like that! Females like it like that.

-Teddy Bear

From The Beat: They've got lots twisted. A grill makes you a man, but a pierced tongue with all that pain, doesn't? Whatever. Still if they all say the sky is green, you can't stop 'em. Do you think all this homophobia trickles down from prison culture and fear of being raped?

Tired

Let me start off by saying Happy Halloween. It's Oct 31, 06. I'm still here, been here for a few months, and this is my third year in a row that I have not been out for Halloween. It gets me mad, because I'm tired of being locked up for the Holidays and from being away from my family, especially from my bra, Mike Jonez, and hopefully one day we will be able to be out for Halloween.

-Lil' Vee

From The Beat: Yeah – you need to be out . For Halloween, for Christmas, for Thanksgiving, for Valentine's Day – heck, for Columbus day, for president's day. You should be out! Out! Out! And now you know what we're going to say next, right?

Make It

i am gon' to make it
in life by doing
the right thing like
go to audio school
when i get out of camp
the first thing i will do
is make a demo c d
to start my career

-Anonymous

From The Beat: Tell us about "audio school". Do you get access to recording equipment so you can make a CD and hustle a legal product for a change? Major props on your plan and willingness to take a stand.

People

people these days don't
know me too well
i'm getting tired of mofo's
messing with me
but i've changed
a whole lot and now
it ain't no more
talking with me
you disrespect me
i disrespect you

-Marquilla

From The Beat: We're always urging change, but not change for the worse. We understand your anger, but ANT (ain't no talking) is like throwing gasoline on a fire, far extinguishing it — the flames go higher. Yeah, that's a pleasing enough fantasy in the heat of your anger, but it's bad news when you make it real. People are always saying, "Why can't I write that? I'm just expressing how I feel." The Beat's about helping you put out those fires that are consuming your life, or should we say your happiness and freedom. You feel? Of course you feel angry, but that doesn't have to be how you deal! Sometimes talk can heal, but if we all do "an eye for an eye" — the whole world'll go blind!

Menace

i'm a menace
to society or
so they say

-Lil' Juanito

From The Beat: We know you're not willing to quit your ways. So, tell us, does that make you a menace like they say?

I Write

I write because I feel like it and because I think I have a passion for it. I love to write. I like to write books and fiction stories.

-Andrew

From The Beat: We hope you never lose this love for writing. Feel free to submit to The Beat some of your stories. After you become a famous author, we'd love to be able to say we had the privilege to publish some of your earlier pieces of work!

Lil' Walt

my name is lil' walt
and i'm a gee
girls know me as a fly guy
but you see how i
put girls on overdrive
i'm all about my money
'cause i got to survive

-Walter

From The Beat: Find a legal j-o-b and you'll have both money and freedom, 'cause when it comes to girls, in here you hardly even see them.

Hustla

i came up
as a hustla type kid
ain't too many dudes
that done did what I did
cutty — check how i live

-Hustla

From The Beat: There are all kinds of hustles you can work — some get you locked up and some put you in the dirt, but a legal hustle will have you both alive and free. So put first things first.

Here Today, Gone

i've lent out a lot of things
that wasn't returned
i've lit a lot of things
that always burned

-Seefore

From The Beat: Maybe it's time you finally learned.

Happy Halloween

I was planning to go out on Halloween, trick-or-treating and bag snatching, but now, I'm here in Juvenile Hall on Halloween, stuck, doing nothing, but writing this, feeling stupid retarded, but even though, still, a thugsta like me is feeling no regrets, but still....

"Financial picture will change for the better."

-Lil' Saefeezy Babe

From The Beat: So it was "trick" rather than "treat" for you this Halloween, huh? Even if you would have been out this past Halloween, based on what you wrote to us regarding what you planned on doing, we bet by the end of the night, you probably would have found yourself behind bars, anyways. Do you like missing holidays? How would you feel if you missed Thanksgiving, Christmas, or even your birthday? We bet you'd feel pretty crappy, so we suggest changing the way you think because if you don't, get used to spending your holidays behind bars.

I'm here in Juvenile Hall on Halloween, stuck, doing nothing, but writing this, feeling stupid retarded

KK

I have a great friend name KK. She's great. She's always there for me. She has a great personality and she's loving. Every time I shed a tear, it seems that she's right there to make me feel better. I thank her 'cause you will always need a friend like that. When she leaves the halls, I will be mad, but happy for her. I love you K.K...

-Moneezy GU

From The Beat: It's so nice to have someone right here who is so close to you. We hope that when she gets out it will be an incentive for you to get out, too — and that you can both keep the other on the right track and away from here!

Something I Regret Lending

To be honest, I don't remember a time when I lent anything to someone . When I was younger I didn't have anything someone would wanna me to lend. However, I do remember "borrowing" hella clothes from the girls in my class and not giving it back to 'em having to think of excuses why I didn't bring it to school 'cause moms wouldn't gimme any cute clothes, just hand-me-downs.

-Maya GU

From The Beat: Did you ever end up giving those clothes back to your friends? Do you think maybe you were a little spoiled by having to wear "cute clothes" and not appreciating the used ones your mom was able to get for you? Did you lose any friends by not returning what they lent you?

Feelings

Have you ever felt like you had to give someone a special part of your body? In order to keep someone that had awful played feelings for you? Have you every felt like you needed someone that you thought wanted you? Have you ever been mentally and emotionally disturbed by someone who you thought and made you feel like you were worth every minute of the day? Well, you could only speak from experience, but let's not get carried away! But have you ever felt like you were getting everything you wanted but still getting everything slowly taken away from you?

-Rosie GU

From The Beat: This series of questions doesn't really work very well without some attempt to answer them. Have you ever felt any of these things? What do you take from these feelings?

Fun With My Friend On Halloween

If I was out at the streets I will go have fun with my friend on Halloween. I wish I never been here in my life, but I did the stuff that was wrong. When I get out I will try to do the right thing.

-Thomas

From The Beat: What do your friend and you enjoy doing on Halloween, Thomas? We hope you can enjoy next Halloween. The fact that you know you did wrong also means that you know what you have to stop doing wrong. You say you will "try" to do the right thing when you get out, so we want to know what will keep you from succeeding?

Never A Menace

Me a menace? Never. If you saw me you wouldn't think that was me, but I do think the people who consider me a menace should look at society as the menace itself. I'm just a product from this menace to society the labelers set up. Trust it's getting worse.

-Cash Money GU

From The Beat: We think you're onto something important here, but since you chose to write on all the topics, you didn't give yourself enough time to think this one through all the way and write much more about what you mean when you say society itself is the menace. That is truly an interesting perspective, but you haven't give it the attention it deserves because you've split your time up among too many subjects. Next time...

I Write

I write because I want my voice to be heard. Writing helps me express myself. I have to tell my story like everybody 'cause ain't no one else's gone do it. You might look at me and assume. Don't say you don't, we all do. But through my writing I want you to understand I got much to say through this right hand.

Write back... and Beat, stop talking some smack.

-Cash Money GU

From The Beat: We at The Beat don't talk smack, CM. We try to say things to challenge you and to make you think about the things you write about (and don't write about), and what you do in life. We give as many props as criticisms, so what you write will determine what we say.

My 62nd Day

What's crackin' wit' you Beat? Today is my 62nd day locked up in here, but my PO just told me that I'm gon' leave on Thursday. They gon send me to some group home in the city called Sage, and I'm gonna have to be in there for two years. I'm hella nervous about how I'm gonna get money when I'm out because they tryin' to have me locked up in that home. Anyway, though, this my last time writin' for y'all (hopefully), so pray for me.

-Maya GU

From The Beat: What exactly would you like us to pray for, Maya? We pray that you learn what you need to learn in order to stay out of the hall... We pray that you learn to respect yourself, meaning that you find a way to get money the legit way! We pray that you start listening to what God is praying to you for... And we pray that you keep writing to The Beat, even when you are in your group home!

Halloween

It's Halloween. I'm in the halls
I ain't had no fun at all
I wish I could leave for just one day
but I can't and I think that causes me dismay
I had some fun but not that much.
I'm trying to make poem but it's sounds bad and messed up.

-LaRonda GU

From The Beat: The poem sounds fine to us, LaRonda, but we don't know how you would use your freedom if you were out. If you were given that one day you ask for, what will you do or who will you see?

Easier To Write Than Talk

I write because it's easier to write words out on paper and let my feelings out. As I write I think about things that I want to express about my feelings, the way I've been feeling. And when I let this out it seems like I've let off so much.

I find it hard sometimes to let anyone know how I feel. So this is why I would rather write down how I feel. Sometimes people don't always listen to what you have to say. So this is also another reason why I write. You can't trust too many people because you then sometimes get hurt, and this is why I write.

-Smiley Girl GU

From The Beat: People write for many reasons, and we like your reasons for wanting to write. A lot of us write for the same reason you write, because it is easier to put feelings on paper than to express them in conversation with someone else. So, keep writing Smiley!

Happy Halloween

Ha, Ha, Ha! Happy Halloween. How about not?
I'm sitting in here in YGC, you know this place they call You Got Caught.
I wish I can go to Castro where it's crackin' and hot, but I'm not.

-Jeannie M GU

From The Beat: You should be glad you were not able to go to the Castro this year because there was violence, and you might have found yourself in the funk.

I Write Because..

I write because I try to keep ma head up and clear and stay outta trouble, feel me. But I ain't go' lie, the shhh hard. And it be hella boring in here when you doing the same shhh every day, I mean 24/7. I been in here fa 6 1/2 months! I don't know how I did it. I supposed to be on the block getting this money 'cause that's all I ever knew is get money or get nothin'.

-Al Bundy B5

From The Beat: So, what are you getting now, money or nothin'? You say that getting money is all you ever knew, but there's something else you know very well, and that's juvenile hall! Don't you see, Al, this "life" (of lock-up) is the direct consequence that "life" (of fast money). Do you write only to keep yourself out of trouble in here, or do you want it to

Three In One

I lent money and love to my loved ones and the people that I trust and respect.

I don't think I'm a menace to society, but some people label my ass that.

I write to express myself and see how other people feel.

-John B1

From The Beat: John, we combined all of your pieces into one, since you wrote exactly one sentence about each topic! Please don't do that again, because you are cheating yourself and us out of knowing who you are or what you think. Take just one topic (not all three), and write more than one sentence about it. In fact, write more than three sentences about it. Don't be lazy. Express yourself in these pages, and do it thoroughly.

The Lent

I sent to a older guy I thought was fly
All he did was approach me all shy
Deep down in my heart he wasn't my type of guy
But I let him slide
He took advantage of my heart and soul
But all he got me to do was take of my clothes and unfold
But it's all good... you won't never see me walk through your door
And that's fo' sho
Get it right
I got what I lent to you,
So ha ha, you lose.

-Jeannie M GU

From The Beat: We have an idea of what you're talking about, but we don't know what you mean when you say, "I got what I lent you." Do you mean your heart? If that's what you mean, then why would you "lend" your hear to someone who "wasn't (your) type of guy?"

I'm Mad

I'm mad 'cause I'm in here for Halloween.
I'm mad because I'm being stupid.
I'm mad 'cause I can't see my mom.
I'm mad because I can't see my dad.
I'm mad because I don't have any freedom.

-Tariq B1

From The Beat: These are good reasons to be angry, Tariq, so what are you going to do when you get out so that you won't have to be made (at yourself) in the future? Any changes in how you live? Like what?

'Bout To Be A Father

W'as up, Beat? This yo' boy, Mike, writing you from B1. Man, I just found out that my girl is pregnant, so it's time for me to get my shhh straight, so I can be out and take care of my baby. I might be up outta here November 8th , and if I do, I'm not never coming back.

-Mike B1

From The Beat: If it takes having a child to stop playing (dangerous) games, then that's what it takes. We really can't understand why you would value that life more than your own, but still we applaud the fact that this new life makes you want to become a responsible adult. What's your specific plan for your future? We hope you don't think you can do just a "little" of what got you here, because there's no such thing. Just keep thinking about your responsibility to that child.

Menace

What the hell? I'm not no damn menace. I just do what I have to do to live. I need money. I need to take care of my loved ones. A man try to play me, I'm gone get him before he get me.

-B-Wizz B1

From The Beat: Is there such a thing as a menace to society? Who qualifies for that label? The problem we have with your analysis is that as long as you make your money on the down low, you'll always be putting yourself in a position where men will try to play you. How long can that last before something terrible — perhaps permanent — happens?

Wayne

Man, I miss my patna, Wayne. They trying ta send ma ninja, 'cause people talking. I ain't gone say too much, because the feds is watchin', but I miss you, bra. Keep it lit.

-Lil Purp B1

From The Beat: Sounds to us like your friend is doing dirt and hopes to get away with it. We can't tell from this piece what the story is, but we can tell that you haven't learned what you need to yet. Whether the feds are watching or not, it's up to you (and your friends) to stop letting the system have its way with you.

Missin' Hella Much

Today is Halloween and I am locked up in "You Got Caught" aka YGC. I'm missin' out on hella shhh. Me and ma brotha was supposed to go down to Castro and get on a few ninjas' line... I'ma go back to my room, spit a few flows wit' my roommate. That's how I'ma do ma Halloween.

-Young Ant B1

From The Beat: We cut from this piece all your references to the dirt you planned to do, but if you were planning to contribute to the violence that ruined this year's Castro celebration on Halloween, then we're glad you were locked up! We're glad for those who might have suffered at your hands, and we're glad for you for avoiding the consequences that, as a child, you didn't consider. Halloween was once a wonderful day for children and everyone else to enjoy. But other children want to ruin it for everyone. We're waiting for those older children to grow up!

Behind These Walls

Man, Beat
Behind these walls they treat us like shhh
Like animals, they lock us in cages
They give us this nasty-ass food
Like two hours and 30 minutes of rec everyday
This ain't the life
Let a real ninja like me out

-Lil' Purp B1

From The Beat: There are plenty of things to complain about the "life" in juvenile hall, Lil' Purp, but in your heart you know you're talking mainly to yourself. It's obvious that you love something — the game and the street — more than you hate juvenile hall since you keep making the choices that put you in this cage. If you want clean sheets, your own clothes, fly shoes, girlfriends, basketball in fresh air, you've got to stay out! It's hard to take these complaints that seriously when we know you are the one responsible for putting yourself here.

Not Really Hard

I'm mad because I'm in juvenile for Halloween. I can't see my family. I missed my cousin birthday and I'm in here. Juvenile is not a place to be in. An' people may come to juvenile thinking they hard, but really not. That's all I got to say. I'm mad right now.

-Quis B1

From The Beat: There are many reasons to be mad about being here, Quis. If we were here, we'd be mad, too — especially on those special days like Halloween when it's so much fun to be free. What makes it even worse is that we know we'd be mad mostly at ourselves for not thinking ahead when we did whatever it was that sent us here. Is that your situation? Are you mad at yourself?

No One Is A Menace To Society

I don't think anyone is a menace to society. Just because I did something bad doesn't mean I am. Anyone can act like that, even the society. Everyone could do anything bad, and even if someone did something bad, he might have changed. To me, you and everyone deserves a second chance.

-Ramon B1

From The Beat: We like that you are willing to give people second chances to correct mistakes that all of us have made in life. But is there a time when the mistakes are so terrible that no second chance is deserved? If someone kills a person, do they deserve a second chance? What if they kill more than one person, or a second and third time after getting a chance? Could society be a menace to itself if it prevents people from getting an education or health care or housing?

Writing Makes Me Less Lonely

I write because I sometimes get lonely and also bored. Sometimes I just feel like expressing myself and telling about my life. I grew up in Oakland till I turned 12 years old. Then I moved with my dad in San Francisco, and that's when I came inside here.

I'm going to get out in a couple of months and go to school and get a job and just kick it wit' my girl. Also, I will take care of my little bra and sisters and little cousins. I wish I was out right now on October 31, 2006, Halloween, 'cause everybody I know is outside having fun. But now I know to stay out of trouble so I can be out for every holiday and birthday. I just will kick it wit' my girl and then get a phone and play the game all day. I just need to get out quick so I can take care of business.

-G-Boa B2

From The Beat: What was it about coming to San Francisco that led you to lock-up? Who were you living with in Oakland, and why did you move? Now that you've let yourself get locked up, who is looking after your little brother and sister and cousins? What will you do when you get out so that you can take care of them without putting yourself in the position of being taken out of their lives again? (We're kind of glad you were not able to attend Halloween celebrations, especially if you were planning to go to the Castro, since some people got shot and stabbed there this year!)

I Gotta Down One

I love being wit' my female because she down. She a keeper. I feel that way because I been through a lot of females and they all seem to play, but not this one. She there for me when I'm in juvenile, and when I'm out, she will do anything I say. And she'll take care of me and give me good information to keep me out.

-E B1

From The Beat: So, what's the "good information" she didn't give you this time that would have kept you out? Or did she give you the information, but you just shined it on? If she will do anything for you, don't you think you owe her more than to allow yourself to be taken away because you loved something more than you love being with her? It's time that you started taking control of and responsibility for your own decisions, and not look to anyone else to tell you right from wrong.

Menace To Society

If someone called me a menace to society, it will make me really mad and sad. It will wanna make me beat the person up who called me a menace to society. If someone called you that, that means they don't got no respect for you.

-Joseph B1

From The Beat: You may be right, Joseph, that if someone called you a menace, that he has no respect for you. But if you beat someone up for what they say, then aren't you just proving what they say is true? Isn't respect built on a foundation of deeds? If so, what deeds do you want to be respected for? Are there such things as menaces to society? If so, who are they?

Careful Of Ninjas In Masks

W'as up, Beat? This is ya boy, Mike, writing from B1. I'm locked up for Halloween for the second year straight, and I feel bad as hell. I'm worried because my little brother and little sister go' be out there trick or treating, and ninjas is running around in masks, so you not go' know who is who. I just hope and pray to God that nothing happens to them and to my ninjas on the block. Be safe, 'cause you know it's Halloween and ninjas go' be walking around in masks. So keep y'all guard up and don't let no other ninjas come through.

-Mike B1

From The Beat: We can definitely feel your love, concern and sense of responsibility for your little brother and sister, and for what might happen out on the streets on Halloween. But how much concern and responsibility did you show them when you gave a bunch of strangers the legal power to take you away from them? Were you even thinking of them at the time? Now they are denied your protection because of your own actions. Do you feel you let them down? Do you think you let yourself down? What are you planning to change about life on the outs so that you won't have to spend a third Halloween in a row in the "costume" of someone locked up in juvenile hall?

Halloween Scarin'

I wish I was out on Halloween so I can have fun and can scare people. Times is hard when you are not wit' yo' family because you don't have no one to be wit' you when you are alone — someone to give you money when you need it. And they will be there. when you get in trouble they will be there for you.

-Brian B2

From The Beat: Maybe this was a good year to skip Halloween since some people got shot and knifed at the celebration! But if you were out on Halloween, how would you scare people? It is good to have family stand by you when you get in trouble. But why not stay out of trouble so that you can stand by them?

It's A Trip

It's a trip, how you could be drinkin' an' smokin'
Wakin' up in a cell, knowin' yo' friends is gone
An' you helluh trippin', like, "Where am I at?"
Tryna call yo' moms, but she neva calls you back
So you think real hard, like, "Where are my thoughts?"
It's a trip, mayn, 'cause mah room feel like a box
An' I can't sleep, thinkin' about Halloween
I can't be home or kick it wit' mah family.

-Randy B1

From The Beat: Do you mean that you sometimes get so drunk and/or stoned that you don't even know what you're doing until you wake up the next morning in lock-up? If that is what you mean, then we think the most important problem for you to address is alcohol and/or drugs. We have never seen any problem that alcohol does not make worse! Your life will not get better (and will get worse) if you are getting drunk and passing out and thinking that's the thing to do.

Thinking Of Family

What it do, Beat? It's yo' boy Big Goof. What keeps me up at night is thinking about my grandmother and my brother.

-Big Goof B2

From The Beat: What is it about your grandmother and brother that make it hard for you to sleep? Are you thinking about how much they need you? Are you thinking about what you need to do to be able to help them by not coming here?

I Write When I'm Bored

I write because it's a way for me to express myself. It keeps me busy during the day when I get bored. Like at school I might get tired of doing work and start writing raps.

-Robert B2

From The Beat: Yeah, writing is a great way to escape boredom. But when you do it at school, you might be missing some important things that you'll need to learn... What kind of raps do you write? Can you write one for us?

Police

The police think I am a menace to society because I keep on getting arrested for no reason. I can't wait to get out so I can go home with my family and move on with my life. I hate it here. I have been here going on two months.

-Janet Jackson B2

From The Beat: Well, Janet, you're supposed to hate it here. They're hoping you'll hate it enough to stay out the next time you're able to make your own choices. Is that in the cards? (Can you tell us why you gave yourself this nickname?)

We All We Got

I say that because we all we got is our ninjas — that's all we got. We only got love fo' our ninjas and our family, because we keep our ninjas close and our enemies closer, and we stay out of trouble, because we stay to ourselves. We all we got.

-Lil' Purp B1

From The Beat: You know, Lil' Purp (or maybe you don't), there's a lot beyond your block — beautiful things you've never seen; ugly things you've never experienced; other cultures and styles and foods and ways of thinking; places of peace and places of war. When we read "We all we got," it makes us cry because "we all we got" has not helped you to stay free, has not moved you forward in school, has not given you a bigger view of the world past the limits of your tiny block. No, you are definitely not all you got, and until you see that, you will be tied to the spot that keeps putting you deeper and deeper down a dark hole. Open your eyes, Lil' Purp, and take in a much bigger world. If you believe in God (we don't know if you do or not), then you cannot be all that you got. All we can hope is that you will, one day, see that there is much more in the world beyond the "we" in that tired old slogan, "We all we got."

I Write Because...

I write because I feel that's one of the ways to express my feelings, 'cause when I write it just makes me like I got out a lot of shhh that been on my mind. 'Cause in here I be havin' a lot of shhh on my mind, stressin' and a lot of otha stuff man.

-D-boom B2

From The Beat: What would have turned this piece into something above average would have been to explain some of those things that are stressing you out and some of the stuff that's been on your mind.

Cold Game

I am going to tell you about that cold game out there in the SF streets. Ninjas get killed and ninjas get robbed. I lost a big homey like two weeks ago. It's scold out there. You better stay safe.

-Donald B2

From The Beat: You are right, the violence on our city streets has reached levels that put everyone's life at risk. How do you keep safe? At least while you're in here you're safe. But no one wants to live here, so what are you going to do when you get free to keep yourself free — and alive?

Getting Out My Feelings

Me, I write because it helps me get out my thoughts and how I feel. Why things get rough for me when I am in the halls because it is hard for me and other people that are in YGC.

-Fat Rat B2

From The Beat: Isn't it interesting that it's sometimes easier to get our thoughts together on paper than it is to just speak them. We think if you keep writing, it will help you throughout your life.

Hate Being In Here

Man, I hate being up in here in YGC because today is Halloween and I got to be wit' my family and friends, my lady. We supposed to be doing things right now. Man, if I wasn't up in here, I would be out on the block wit' my homies. Had to go home at 6:00, but I would be at the house eatin' hella candy.

Man, I don't know how y'all feel. We need to get out. But yeah, keep yo' head up while you up in here, and when you get out, try not to come back for real. Y'all keep it KI (keep it real). Get out and go to school. Wit'out school no job.

-Jeremiah B2

From The Beat: Halloween reminds you of what you're missing on the outs — which is everything! So, can you find a way to stay out of here so that you can enjoy the things you miss? Yes, school is a ticket to a job, but it's much more than that. It's a way to expand your horizons, to learn about people and things you know nothing about, and to become a better person.

When I Was Little. I Used To Think...

When I was like eight, I thought I was gone make it in life, but now I'm in here in YGC. But I'm get out soon, and when I get out, I'ma proceed my plan and stay focused on my school work, play football, go to college and go pro. But first it's up to me to do what I'm going do.

But when I was lil', I ain't think I was gone end up in here. Ever since I start hangin' up in the 'hood, life done changed as time go by, and dat's when hard time come. Start messing wit' the law, getting played by the cops, and I now realize your homies don't come and see you or write chu. You got to know who your real friends are.

-Jeremiah B2

From The Beat: Knowing who your real friends are is important, but even more important is being a real friend to yourself! If you are "messing with the law," then the cops aren't playing you, you are playing yourself.

Show Me The Money

I have lent a lot of things to my folks that have never came back, or have came back but I have no longer wanted it anymore. I lent my pants, jerseys, shoes, even my car. All these things have come back with something wrong with them.

Before I lent them or sold them, I knew I was doing something wrong. I am in the hole with people owing me more than a thousand, probably more than that. See a person like me, I pay my debts because I'm a man of my word.

-Yung Luua B5

From The Beat: How does "a man of his word" — a teenage man of his word with no job — end up having a thousand dollars or more to lend to people? If you took property or money that didn't belong to you in the first place, then you're neither a man of his word nor a person who pays his debts — only a person who doesn't see the connection between what you take and what you owe... Aren't you here because the system considers this the way you have to pay those debts? We only hope you don't find yourself owing the system such big time debts (from big time crimes) that you'll be "paying" them off with years inside the hellholes the system has lying in wait for you!

When I Get Out

Man what's up with The Beat? Man, when I get out... when I get out I'm tryin' to get back in school. But when I get out I'm going to go to my flip house, ya know. Or smokin' some of that purp with the homies or with bra. When I get out.

-D-boom B2

From The Beat: Here's what we see in this short piece... You will TRY to get back to school when you're out, but you WILL smoke with the homies. That tells us that your focused on the wrong things to get your life back under your control. We're afraid that if you have no more of a plan than this for when you get out, you'll soon be back writing about "When I Get Out..."

If I Don't Wanna Talk, I Write

I write stuff because, like, if I have something that happened to me and don't wanna talk about it, I just write it down.

-Joseph B1

From The Beat: That's a great reason to write, Joseph. Can you give us an example of something you don't want to talk about but that you do want to write about?

No Menace To Society

I don't think I'm a menace to society because whatever I did I was just being a kid. Everybody makes mistakes. I admit I messed up, but that don't mean I'm a danger to the outside world. They don't know me and they don't how I act when I'm out. All they got is a juvenile record where I messed up a little. I think I deserve another chance to show them I could help the society.

-G Baby B2

From The Beat: Not only do you deserve another chance, but you will be getting that chance. When you do, how do you plan to help society? How do you plan to help yourself?

I Hate Being Locked Up

Man I hate being locked up in YGC.
This really ain't the place to be.
But I know one day I will be set free
and I plan to stay free.
But as long as I run the streets,
I know I will be heading back to YGC.

-LBG B2

From The Beat: You know everything you need to know about this place, Lloyd. You know what you have to do to stay out of this place, too, so now it's in your hands. You should be heading to college, not to juvenile hall!

Bra Bra Buda

What's ups bra bra? What it do? I really do miss you. You got a niece and a nephew! I just had your niece last year (August 4, 2005). Do you remember when we went to Texas? It was so hot. I had just had your nephew, we had fun though because everyone want to hold him and watch him.

Well, I got caught up for some stupid shhh. I been to the halls twice. This is my second time here! I been away from home for goin' on seven months. My great grandma died on the 21st of October. I gotta go, Happy Halloween.

-LaRonda GU

From The Beat: LaRonda, you are no longer a child that can run around and do whatever you want with no responsibility. You are now a mother with children that depend on you. Whatever you did to get caught up, you now know you must stop doing if you don't want to get wrapped up again. You have taken on the most responsible role there is, that of mother. The fact that you allowed yourself to come here is a sign that you are not yet ready for that heavy responsibility. Are we wrong? Tell us how.

The Way It Is

Life is really hard in the system. My PO played me just to get a bonus. They disrespect me because my color. They took my clothes, my purse, my money, and they took my dignity. They lock me in a room. I feel so alone. Everyone is so messed up, it seems like they won't leave me alone. I pray to God to keep me strong and to keep me sane and in the right kind of brain.

-Kirstin GU

From The Beat: Did "they" take all these things from you — your respect, your dignity, your freedom — or did you give it to them? We don't see any acknowledgment here that you have any responsibility at all for your situation. Praying to God is all well and good, but we believe God is also praying to you. What do you think He might be asking you to do? Are you listening to Him?

Menace To Society

What's up Beat? This yo' boy D-Lo. They call me D-Lo because I stay on the unda. Anyway, back to the subject, my definition of menace to society is someone who's out of control and steady causes mayhem throughout the community. I lightweight do fit my own description of a menace to society, but then again I don't fit in because all I did was hit a couple of laptop licks and like two assaults and run from every placement they sent, including the can-ass Ranch and they talking about I'm a menace to society. What the hell. Well Beat, I gotta go. My PO tell me I need a 9 to 5. I already got a job and that's stayin' alive.

-Two Thumbs B5

From The Beat: Guess you weren't D-Lo enough to keep yourself out of here! Instead of doing dirt on the down low, have you considered coming out into the light of day by not doing the things that bring you here? We know you're tired of this place, but we also see that you continue to duck your responsibility for your situation. Here you admit to being a thief, and an assaulter, plus you reveal yourself as immature because you've run from every placement that didn't suit you. Then you describe these things with the words, "all I did...," as if this is nothing. When does it become something? If you're "working" to stay alive, then we suggest you find a new line of work!

On The Outs

I write because I don't want to be in my room bored as hell. If I would be on the block with the block boy, I would be getting ripped off my mind. Then we would get our ways out to the Castro District to go see what is cracking. Then I would see who is out there who I know. Then I go to the house and see if my parents is home to sneak a female over the house to pull a all-nighter. She would spend the night so we would do the nasty. Hold on... before all this I forgot. First I would go wit' the fam-bam to go trick or treat wit' the young little cousins and nieces to get the most candy.

-Mutt B2

From The Beat: Even though your first sentence is about why you write, you didn't really address that topic at all. You talked about what you'd do if you were on the outs with your boys, and from what we read, it doesn't appear that you're doing much thinking about how to stay out of this place. It's great to have fun, but you also have to think seriously about your life. Here's a simple formula to remember: If you don't start making plans for your life that keep you moving forward, someone else will be making plans for your life that you won't like at all!

Sad, Mad, And Hurt

Locked up feelin' like dirty, man. I'm hurt. If something ever happen to my mom or you, I'll probably be in here for murda.

-Cash Money GU

From The Beat: Stop writing on all three topics CM. There is hardly anything in what you wrote here worth publishing. It says nothing, and the reason it says nothing is because you're trying to write on all three topics instead of concentrating on just one. That cheats you and us of learning more about who you are and what you think. Take one topic next time and really write about it in detail!

No One Thinks About It

Son cosas que uno no piensa bien, (There's stuff no one thinks about) in the world an' on the streets now. To be out in peace with my family.

-Melsar B1

From The Beat: You're right, Melsar, there are many things that people should be thinking about that they never do. Can you give us some examples of things that people should be thinking about?

Paying Me Slowly

I remember when I let one of tha homies hold a hot 100, and it did take a minute to pay me back, feel me. He was payin' me in bits, but is' coo'. I still love him 'cause da's big brah.

-One Luv B2

From The Beat: What, exactly, do you mean by "a hot 100?" If "hot" means you took it from someone else, then even if your homie never paid you back, he'd only be doing to you what you did to someone else. If you "earned" that money, we're curious to know how...

Menace To Society

A menace to society means to me when ninjas just don't give a damn on the streets. They just do anything anytime. Me, I don't consider myself being a menace to society. You see, I do what I want but I know my limits. That's why I consider myself not a menace.

-Young Meel B5

From The Beat: If you know your limits, why did you allow yourself to be taken from your home and family to be put in this jail? What are your limits, and what do they mean if they can't keep you free?

Why

Why is it that people have to lie to you all the time about nothing. They say they will do something but they do not do it. But if you lie to them, they want to give you room time when you are in the halls. That to me is bullshh why they can not follow the rules too.

Why I cannot do what I want? I want to be able to see some big booty girls and do what I do be able to walk a girl down the street and hold hand. I do not want to see the girls on the clean up crew.

-Fat Rat B2

From The Beat: Come on, FR, be serious. You know very well why you can't do what you want to do. It's because you're a prisoner, a short-term slave of a system designed to tell you what to do and not to do. Your own choices put you here in this all-male environment where staff has the power to make and break promises but you don't. That's what jail is all about, so you might want to give your choices some serious thought... unless you're getting to like it here.

Halloween In YGC

Man, they got the thugs locked up on Halloween. We 'posed to be out having fun. I can't wait to get out of YGC because the new jail opening in a month. I love y'all little brothers. Love, Fat Thug, always.

-Fat Thug B5

From The Beat: We can understand why you feel frustrated being locked up at any time, and especially at Halloween Fat Thug. But when you say you should be out there "having fun," it worries us because every time you're out there, the "fun" that you have leads you right back here! Aren't you tired of it?

Cash Me Out

What it do Beat? You know me. Man, gots to get mine. Nah... But wassup? One thing I do regret givin' is the banger to one of the homies. I had gave it to him because he said he was leavin' the block by himself and I didn't want him to be slippin' so, feel me, I let the homie see the thang. Then when he got back this ninja said he threw ma shhh 'cause he got chased by the 5-0. So I told that ninja he gotta cash me out on citaz or he was go' get the bedniss. So he gave me a few hunits, and smoked a few blunts wit' me. Then it was all coo'.

-Al Bundy B5

From The Beat: Would it have been cool with you if your friend had tried to use your shooter on one of the cops and had been killed in the process? Or if they had found the gun on him and he ended up being prosecuted as an adult and doing hella time? Or he shot someone with it and it turned out to be the wrong person — a child perhaps? We don't know if you plan to continue this kind of street life when you get out or not, Al, but we hope you think very carefully about it, because the "games" you describe here will certainly put you back in the box... The only question is whether the box will be one that you can walk out of one day, or... well, you know the "or" part... (We wish you were writing about this event in England, because in the English that they speak over there, a banger is a hot dog!)

Why I Write...

I write because I could reveal a lot of stuff without getting in trouble from anyone or anybody telling me that I'm right or wrong. I don't like anyone telling me what to do. There's a lot of stuff I write and get off of my chest. If I don't write I'll write a rap. I'll write a rap better because people could hear me better and they could relate to me, you feel me.

-Yung B B5

From The Beat: Well, we feel your piece, but we don't feel your rap. Can we? Why not write a rap for The Beat? We'd love to hear it... or read it.

Lo Que Me Hace Fuerte?

Hey, que onda raza? Otra vez es este loco diciendoles que show. Pues lo que les voy a contar es aserca de lo que me hace fuerte al estar encerrado. Es mi Jefita, mi lil carnalita, mi sobrina y mi hyna.

Pues mi jefita me da la fuerza para seguir adelante. Ella es lo único que tengo en la vida y en el mundo entero.

Mi jana es quien me hace sentir bien 'cause I know she loves me like I love her. Eso me hace sentir con ánimos y me obliga a tener la frente en alto. Y mi sobrinita aunque no conozco a mi sobrina por que he estado torcido.

Estoy son los motivo por la cual pienso positivamente. No quiero peliar por que podría agarrar nuevos cargos. Eso no vale la pena.

Ya solo me faltan 30 días para salir. Eso es lo único que pienso hacer bien para salir pronto. Ahora en adelante primero es la familia y luego el desmadre. Bueno pues alrato to every body and keep trucha .

From The Beat: Bueno, esperamos que esta vez que salgas te dediques a pasartela con tu familia. Ellos necesitan de ti como tú necesitas de ellos. Tienes todo lo que necesitas para vivir una vida tranquila. No tires todo a la basura. Sigue tu vida y no veas atras. Mira y busca la forma como hacer mejores cosas que traigan cosas positivas a tu vida.

What Makes Me Strong?

Hey, what's up my Latin people? Once again, it's this crazy guy letting y'all know what's up. Well, what I am going to share with y'all is regarding what makes me strong despite being locked up: It's my mother, my lil' sister, my niece, and my girlfriend.

Well, my mother gives me the strength to continue forward. She is the only thing I have in life and in the whole world.

My girlfriend is the person who makes me feel good 'cause I know she loves me like I love her. That makes me feel full of ambition and it obliges me to maintain my head up high, and also my niece, even though I have not met my niece yet because I have been locked up.

These are the motives as to why I think positively. I don't want to fight because I could get new charges. That is not worth it.

I only have 30 days to go before I get out. That is the only thing I plan on doing and that's being good so I can get out soon. From now on, family comes first and then fooling around. All right then, I'll holla at everybody later and keep your guards up.

-Zombie

From The Beat: Well, we hope that this time when you get out, you dedicate yourself to spending your time with your family. They need you just as much as you need them. You have everything that a person needs in order to live a calm life. Don't throw it all away in the garbage. Continue moving forward with your life and don't look back. Look forward and find the way to do better things that bring positive things to your life.

I only have 30 days to go before I get out. That is the only thing I plan on doing and that's being good so I can get out soon.

La Casa Encantada

Una vez unos niños fueron a pedir dulces a una casa encantada. Nadie tenía el valor para acercarse a la casa. Una noche de Halloween, unos niños hicieron una apuesta. Fue a ver quien iba a pedir dulces a la casa encantada. Un niño fue a pedir, pero cuando toco la puerta vio que adentro tenían fiestas los fantasmas. Estaba el Diablo, y todos sus amigos. La persona que fue se murio en el instante. Nadie supo porque murio.

From The Beat: Pero tú si sabes porque murio, que no? ¿Hubieras tenido el valor de entrar a una casa encantada, si existiera? Gracias por tu historia, esperamos que puedan dormir los demas despues de leer esto.

The Haunted House

Once upon a time, some children went to go ask for some candy from a haunted house. No one had the courage to approach the house. One Halloween night, some children made a bet. The bet was which one of them would go approach the house and ask for some candy. One boy went to go ask, but when he knocked on the door, he saw that inside, ghosts were having a party. The devil was there and all his friends. The person who went died right on the spot. No one knew why he died.

-Jony, Marin

From The Beat: But you know why he died, right? Would you have had the courage to enter inside a haunted house if it existed? Thank you for your story. We hope that people will be able to sleep after reading your piece.

El Hombre De Las Vacas

La verdad es que en Honduras no celebra Halloween. En un pueblito llamado Cedras había un hombre muy pobre el cual deseaba ser rico. Un día le contaron sobre un pacto con el Diablo. El hombre tonto como tenía ganas de ser rico, le pregunto al hombre y se fue en busca del diablo.

Despues de aquella noche todo le cambio y el hombre pobre desaparecio. Despues aparecio con mucho dinero comprando cosas, terrenos, y ganado. Tenía lo que había deseado. ¿Pero a qué precio? Tubo que entregar su alma despues de tener lo que quería. Se arrepintio pero era tarde. Ya le había llegado la hora. Le dijo a su mujer, "tengo que irme, vete a resar por mí que me ire a las 12 de la noche. Toda su familia estaba en la iglesia y escucharon cuando pasaba gritando, "arre vaca, arre vaca y despues nunca lo volvieron a ver. Dicen que todavía se escucha el trote de Ganado a las 12 de la noche.

From The Beat: Que historia tan miedosa! ¿Quien te conto esta historia? ¿Es leyenda o es algo que tú lo inventastes? ¿Si se puediera hacer estos tipos de pacto, darías tu alma por riqueza? Dicen que las cosas del Diablo existen, mantente alejado.

The Man From The Cows

The truth is that in Honduras, we do not celebrate Halloween. In a town called "Cedras," there was a very poor man who longed to be rich. One day, they told him about a pact with the devil. The dumb guy, since he had the desire to be rich, asked the guy and he went out in search of the devil.

After that night, everything changed for him and the poor man disappeared. Later on, he reappeared with lots of money buying things, land, and winning. He had what he had longed for, but at what price?

-Franklin B1

From The Beat: What a scary story! Who told you this story? Is this a legend or something that you invented? If these kind of agreements could be made, would you give up your soul for riches? They say that the Devil's things exist, keep yourself away from these things.

Aveces Es Dificil Perdonar

Creo que aveces no podemos perdonar porque es algo muy duro de hacer. Aveces te han herido tanto que aunque uno quiera perdonar no puedes hacerlo porque tu corazón quiere, pero tu mente no. Aveces no puedes perdonar porque te han hecho mucho daño aunque sea alguién muy especial, a quien queries en tiempos pasado y querías mucho. Y se nos hace muy dificil perdonar.

Bueno, es mi forma de pensar sobre este tema porque son cosas que en otros momentos me han occuridos y se me han hecho bien dificil hacerlo. Sólo le pido a Dios que cambie mi forma de pensar para así poder perdonar a las personas que me han hecho mal.

From The Beat: Esperamos que Dios te ceda ese deseo de perdonar aquellos quienes te han hecho mal. Aveces guardar esos rencores sin sacarlos, perjudican más nuestras vidas. Deberías de darte la oportunidad de tratar de perdonar a alguién de corazón para adaptarte a perdonar a los demás. Trata, no te va a quitar nada al intentarlo.

Sometimes It Is Difficult To Forgive

I believe that sometimes, we cannot forgive because it is something very hard to do. Sometimes, they have hurt you so much that even though they ask you for forgiveness, you cannot do it because your heart wants to, but your mind doesn't. Sometimes you cannot forgive because they have done so much damage to you that even though that person may be someone special, someone whom you loved during past times and loved a whole lot and it gets difficult for us to forgive.

Well, this is what I think about this topic because they are things that in other moments have happened to me and it has been very difficult for me to do. I just ask God to change my way of thinking so I can be able to forgive those people who have done me wrong.

-Darwin B4

From The Beat: We hope that God grants you your wish to be able to forgive those who have done you wrong. Sometimes holding those resentments without getting them out can impair our lives even more. You should give yourself the opportunity to try to forgive someone with all your heart so you can adapt to forgiving the rest. Try; it will not cost you a thing to give this a chance.

Sometimes you cannot forgive because they have done so much damage to you that even though that person may be someone special, someone whom you loved during past times and loved a whole lot and it gets difficult for us to forgive.

Mi Sueño Casi Hecho Realidad

Cuando yo era pequeño tenía muchos pensamientos. Uno de esos pensamientos que me llamaba más la atención era lo que siempre me imaginaba. Me imaginaba que un día iba a estar en Los Estados Unidos. En mi imaginación, yo me vehía rodeado de muchas cosas que en mi país no podía tener.

Aveces tenía hasta sueño con esto. Yo les contaba a mis padres y ellos siempre me decían, "Voz estas quedando loco."

Siempre en mi mente decía que iba a cumplir mi sueño y que les iba a demostrar lo contrario. Ahora que estoy aqui me siento muy contento porque lo que me imaginaba cuando estaba pequeño, lo que era un simple sueño, ahora es realidad.

Le doy gracias a Dios porque me ayudo a cumplir las palabras que le pedi. Ahora solo le pido a Dios que me ayude a salir de aqui para acompletar mi sueño.

From The Beat: Pero parece que tubistes un gran sueño lo cual lo cumplistes, pero no duro mucho. ¿Si te dieran otra oportunidad, que tienes planeado hacer? ¿Aparte de venir a este pais, que otras cosas tenias planeado hacer aqui? Si te dan otra oportunidad, no la desaproveches. Las cosas son dificiles obtenerlas pero faciles perderlas. Recuerda siempre esto.

My Dream That Almost Became A Reality

When I was little, I had a lot of thoughts. One of those thoughts that caught my attention the most is what I would always imagine. I would always imagine that one day I was going to be in the United States. In my imagination, I would see myself surrounded by many things that in my country, I could not have.

At times, I would even dream about this. I would tell my parents about this and they would always say, "You're going crazy."

In my mind, I would always say that I was going to fulfill my dream and that I was going to demonstrate to them the contrary. Now that I am here, I feel very happy because what I would imagine when I was little, what was a simple dream, is now reality.

I give thanks to God because He helped me fulfill the words that I requested from him. Now I just ask God to help me get out of this place so I can complete my dream.

-Piche B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: But it appears that you had a huge dream which you fulfilled, but it didn't last for long. If they gave you another opportunity, what do you have planned on doing? Besides coming to this country, what other things do you have planned on doing here? If they give you another opportunity, don't let it go to waste. Things are difficult to obtain, but very easy to lose. Always remember this.

El Perdón

No me han maltratado ni me han lastimado. El día que me hicieran algo perdonaría si es poca cosa, dependiendo de lo que sea.

Si me gustaría que me perdonaran para aprender a perdonar un poco más. Es duro perdonar cuando uno trata de hacerlo y no puede. También es duro cuando a la persona a quien se le pide perdón, no te da la oportunidad de hablarle.

Me gustaría que me perdonaran mi comportamiento y mi manera de pensar porque aveces uno no tienen pensamientos buenos.

From The Beat: Es verdad, para saber perdonar hay que perdonar y ser perdonado. ¿Alguna vez has tratado de perdonar a alguién y no podistes? Hay gente que saben perdonar y otros que no saben perdonar. ¿Cual de los dos perteneces? Busca la manera como alejarte de esos pensamientos negativos que te puedan meter en más problemas. Busca la manera como quebrar tu relacion con cosas negativas y personas negativas para obtener pensamientos positivos. ¿Has leído la Biblia?

Forgiveness

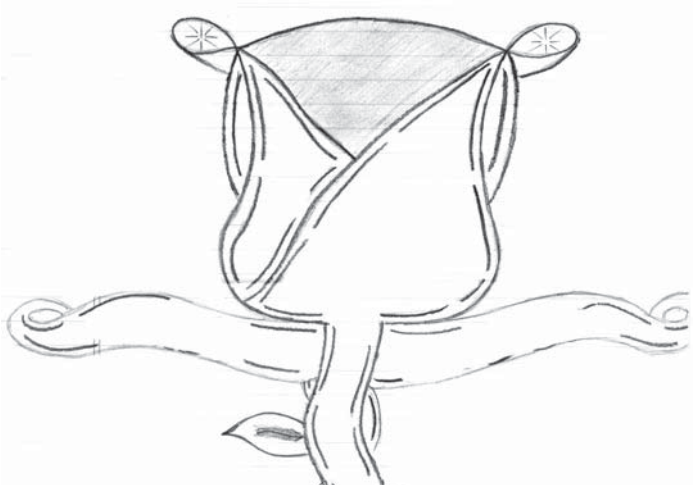
They have not mistreated me nor have they hurt me. The day that they do something to me, I would forgive them if it is something small. It all depends on what they did to me.

Yes, I would like it if they would forgive me so I could learn how to forgive a little more. It is hard to forgive when one tries to and can't. It is also hard when the person whom you are asking for forgiveness does not give you the opportunity to speak to them.

I would like it if they would forgive me for my behavior and my way of thinking because sometimes, one does not have good thoughts.

-Marvin B4

From The Beat: It is true; in order to know how to forgive, one has to forgive and be forgiven. Have you ever tried to ask for forgiveness from someone and you were not able to? There are people that know how to forgive and there are other that don't know how to forgive. Out of the two, which one do you belong to? Look for a way to distance yourself from those negative thoughts that could get you in more problems. Look for the way to break your relationship with negative things and with negative people so you can obtain positive thoughts.



Lo Que Voy A Hacer

Q-vole Beat? Que haciendo. Pues yo aqui de Nuevo. Pues escribiendo para ti carnal.

Yo pienso que voy a hacer bien mi programa para poder estar en mi canton y para estar con la jefita. Tambien para poder trabajar y ayudar en el canton. Pues, orale. Pues, espero escribir en el próximo día.

From The Beat: Nos parece muy bien que estes pensando de esta manera. Ahora lo que tenemos que ver es que si en verdad vas a cumplir las cosas que dices.

What I Am Going To Do

What's up Beat? What are y'all doing? Well, I'm in here again. Well, writing for you, bro'.

I think that I am going to do my program well so I can be at my home and also to be with my mother. Also, so I can be able to work and help out around the house. Well, all right then. Well, I look forward to writing the following day.

-Buda

From The Beat: We're very pleased to read that you are thinking this way. Now what we have to see is, if you truly fulfill the things that you say you are going to fulfill.

Mis Consejo Al Preso Por Vida

Querido preso por vida, todo en esta vida se perdona, pero también se castiga con otras cosas en la vida. Lo siento mucho. Te quiero dar un consejo. Sigue las reglas, portate bien, ruegale a Dios por ti y otras personas. Tal vez te puedan dar una oportunidad. Tu estas por vida y yo por un mes o menos. Tú estas por muchod años de tu vida. Cuidate mucho!

From The Beat: Que detaye tan lindo. Lastimosamente ellos estaran ahí por el error que hicieron. Así es la vida. Por eso, les aconsejamos a todos que busquen como hacer las cosas mejor, que no se metan en cosas negativas.

My Advice To Those Who Are Locked Up For Life

Dear lifer, everything in this life is forgiven, but also one is punished with other things in life. I deeply regret to hear about your situation. Follow the rules, behave yourself, and pray to God for yourself and other people. Maybe they will give you another opportunity. You're behind bars for life while I am behind bars for a month or less. You're behind bars for many years of your life. Take good care of yourself!

-Juan B1

From The Beat: What a nice dedication! Unfortunately, they will be behind bars for the mistakes that they made. That's how life is. That's why we advise everyone to look for a way to do better things and to not get yourselves involved in negative things.

JAMES R. MCQUERY ***Here goes a first time writer (for us) on a mission. He says in his letter to us that he's been incarcerated for THIRTY CONSECUTIVE YEARS now. That's probably more years than most of us who work here have been alive. We know he's been through a whole hell of a lot. Anyhow he's writing from Washington State Penitentiary in Walla Walla, Washington wanting to know if he could get a book he wrote published in its entirety in The Beat. Well, we couldn't publish it in its entirety in one issue being that the BWO section is usually around fifteen thousand words and since your collection of writings is close to thirteen thousand, we wouldn't have much room for everyone else that week. But what we could do is ensure you get in with installments. Meaning we'll publish your book in its entirety, but we would have to do it in parts. Maybe publish close to three thousand words over the next four issues. Is that okay? Otherwise, we just can't do it right now... Maybe when we start to expand...***

To Whom It May Concern

As you have ascertained from my address I am incarcerated in Washington State. I been incarcerated for thirty (30) consecutive years for the crime of assault. I was incarcerated shortly after the closing days of the war in Vietnam. I wanted you to hear the truth from me as opposed from somebody else.

During the war in Vietnam I served two (2) tours of duty. During that conflict I retained a journal about certain events and situations. Since my incarceration I have written a manuscript about that conflict from the standpoint of the P.B.R (Patrol Boat River) crews serving on the rivers of Vietnam.

The stories are an anecdotal compilation of events about our young, brave men and women who wear our nation's military uniforms and go into harm's way, much like our young people in Iraq and Afghanistan today.

My stories and poetry are about our average Americans. The Mexican-American, Irish-American, German-American, Jewish-American and the rest. Their stories are true and accurate; and are told in a way to give us pause to ever enter war's killing fields ever again! The gratuitous violence has been ameliorated as it is unnecessary and for the most part, overplayed by other writings of that conflict. It is only used to illuminate a point.

Men are not the only ones to serve their nation's call to duty. Women, too, served with distinction and valor during that war. These women displayed the courage under fire which made the most hardened combat veteran green with envy. I know, I was more than proud of them! If an individual exhibits the courage of a warrior, it matters not if that individual is male or female!

My stories and poetry attempts to tell their story about the war from their point of view. Hopefully I have done precisely that.

The manuscript is entitled "The Ghost of the River." It is condensed and contains 11,373 words of stories and 1,032 words in the poetry. A total of 12,405 words altogether.

Publication would be advised in its entirety as the stories are more accurately connected for affect of fact and not on fantasy. If you are unable to publish my manuscript in its entirety, I'll understand completely. I will then thank you for your kindness in reading and evaluating my request.

In closing may I say that after the war in Vietnam and the subsequent years following that nightmare, approximately 43% percent of all Vietnam veterans were incarcerated in American Prisons. Perhaps, just perhaps, the manuscript "The Ghost of the River" will answer the solitary question, "Why?"

Thank you so much for your time and patience in reading this query letter.

MONICA ***Make way for a very loyal Beat writer and reader who's currently in the adult county jail Estrella in Phoenix, Arizona. She hits us with a piece that rings true even in the title, "Only The Strong Survive." In this piece she talks about how when on the streets she can only think of hittin' the pipe, but while in jail she's thinking of her nana, mom, familia, and even her homies. We're sure a lot of us who've been out and gone back can relate to that. It's hella easy to say we're going to change when we're inside away from temptation, but when we're faced with the pressures of the streets, temptation sneaks up on us, and before you know it we're right back in jail again. How can one put an end to this cycle of getting out only to go back in? Well, maybe we can all come up with an answer together because we shouldn't have to put ourselves through such madness...***

If an individual exhibits the courage of a warrior, it matters not if that individual is male or female!

Only The Strong Survive

When I'm locked up my life feels like it's missing something. When I'm on the streets I don't even think. When I'm locked up I cry for my nana, my mom, my familia, my homies, the good old days and even the hard ones. When I'm out I could only think of one thing. And that's of hitting the "G" pipe, only 'cause I think and feel like it takes me away. I like the way it puts me in a daze. But whenever I come down it's a whole different town, back in jail. In my four man cell. Right here with my three cellies, awaiting to be sentenced trippin' balls on whether we're gonna do some time in AZ, prison.

We talk about how we want to change. And damn these are the days we'd kill to be out with homies, primos and family. But straight up it hard out there in the calles (streets). You can't fool nobody, especially yourself. Going back to the crazy family, homies, drugs, violence, and the crime. Someone once said it's like trying to survive a damn war zone. But you gotta stay strong. So remember don't let nada get you down.

And when I'm locked up I know what my life is missing — my family, success, survival, strength, happiness and friends. And when I'm out the key is to put all the bull behind me and drop the pipa 'cause I know I'm better than that. Especially when I'm reminded of this sorry jail, and all my family that's doin' time in the pinta. I don't wanna follow footsteps! I gotta stay strong.

So to all that are locked up, keep your heads up! And know you can overcome that crazy life. And to everyone serving real time in prison, stay strong and pray to the good Lord. Remember que, only the strong survive.

JAVIER ***In his little note at the end of the poem he says he's 'dropping these lines hoping this poem catches someone's mind.' We're sure it will as the title, 'Reality Check,' suggests it's something we really need to read and it is just that... a reality check. He's putting real life experiences in our faces and letting us decide whether we want to take them or leave them. And after reading the ideas floating around in his head we've decided to take them. He's writing from Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, CA. Thank you for that "Reality Check"...***

Reality Check

I didn't graduate from school,
I didn't think I would need the tool,
Don't get me wrong I ain't no fool,
Now kick back and read this while you sit on that stool,
Being incarcerated is like being sedated,
Numb from struggling
Have to resort to bubbling,
Hope your paper doublin',
Avoiding cops just to win,
Now ask your self is my life really worth all this sin?
Having to pack lead just to stay ahead,
It's still early you get it through your head,
You might wind up dead,
Being incarcerated is like being perpetrated,
You walk through life being sedated,
I live numb everyday I committed a crime just for pay,
Listen youngsters stay out of this way,
You heard!

DAVE KODET ***We are always grateful when we receive letters from people who recognize the importance of this work. And this next first time writer is recognizing us from a whole 'nother state. Writing from Wisconsin State Prison in Winnebago, Wisconsin, we give you a man who's wise enough to be aware of the fact that people are suffering from the same things out there as we do out here. And that in order for some real change to happen we all need to come together and learn from one another. In a place where communication with the outside world is minimal The Beat can play a vital role in connecting stories and experiences as a way to keep us informed. Thank you for your kind words and we anticipate your contest submission...***

Listen Up!

Let the great brainwashing begin
In order to do this I look within
Who'd imagine the world as my enemy
When I was growing up I left no envy
Call me an addict 'cause I write to forget.
But I don't forget, I remember shhh.
Like a membership of insults and hatreds
It's all so real so who would fake this
I'm meeting out my justice in reverse
Too many times I fell victim to the curse
Y'all want in but I want out
"Ef" the world is what ya' hear me shout
Taught through life to stay away from human contact
Sat out 8 months with 10 I'm back.
Leading this war, a war at first sight
Round up the troops we ride at first light.

The Beat

Today I received the two jammed packed issues of The Beat Within you sent! I just want to thank you. It is through programs such as yours that we can reach our youth. I live in the Mid-West but we too have a high murder rate, and as I write this we had a school shooting in which the principle was killed even a failed school bombing plot that could have paralleled to Columbine. Point blank, it's rough all over. I agree we need to come together to show unity for our world is unstable.

It is said some of the most talented people are behind bars. What's sad is that we are a product of our surroundings and for the most part that means the ghettos and streets. I'm 25 years old and am on my 2nd bit, this one for 10 years. I have a high school diploma and college degree, but my agenda conflicted with society. It took prison 2x's to shake me up a little and though my agenda has changed, it still conflicts with society, why? (because I am a four time loser) I get released in a year and this time I'm ready for it. I've game planned and set goals. And while I don't live out in Cali I would love to stay on your mailing list and if possible drop off a deep thought here or there, for we too have deep thinkers in the Mid-West. I will be entering the 'Letter To The President' contest but first I leave you with a prose to do with what you will... my message is clear.

SHARICE WASHINGTON ***This next writer learned about us from her social worker, Jacqueline Kelly, who works at the Office of the Appellate Defender, in New York City. For your information Appellate Defender is a public defender type of law firm that works at the appellate level. Jacqueline is a social work intern there, as her office is unique in that it has a social work department. She work with clients who are currently incarcerated all over New York State, regarding: issues of advocacy in prison and reentry work. Our good fortune, that Jacqueline has been working with the talented (and first time Beat contributor) poet Ms. Sharice Washington, who has been incarcerated for about seven years. She is currently at Bedford Hills Correctional Facility, she was transferred back there after her tenuous stay at Albion State Prison. As you will read, poetry (as for most of us) is therapeutic to her. We bet Sharice is going to be very excited to read her work in The Beat Within, as is Jacqueline. We hope this is not the last time we hear from you Sharice (and you too Jacqueline! Welcome!***

Red Trailer Truck

Well, I thought it was a trailer for weeks that pass
but then one day I looked up close for the sun had past.
It was a part of a truck,
the long part stuck and left to hide
more or less die on season change.
But, might I say, this object is still blood red.
So no sudden dread, GOD has saved it,
weather has not changed it .
It has no rust, trust me, I would know,
it stands out in the sun hoping for a future which there is none.
I say what is the red thing's story,
it holds no junk yard glory.
Yes, I am blue and the owner... no clue
Well red thing I must go, keep your high pro glow,
don't say no, you will be lead one day too to a real home far away
I hope never dead,
Good night, good luck.
My mysterious red trailer truck.

"IT was out my window across the way, in Albion SHU everyday."

WE RISE

We RISE
We rise above the deepest sea
and ocean carries thee
No matter how far here! we are
we're not going anywhere
Our GOD cares

WE RISE

We stare across the waves to swim
And reach the valley
We are here do you care

WE RISE

This is the occasion
Where our brothers and sisters
And spirits sings
And we hang on the word as the waves come
Crashing down

WE RISE

Our feet hit the sand
The sun tans our beautiful hands
As we look up above
Show us some love
We now see the blue birds and doves

WE RISE

As our eyes meet and we run towards valley heat

WE RISE

As they find a cure to end the painful memories and death once more

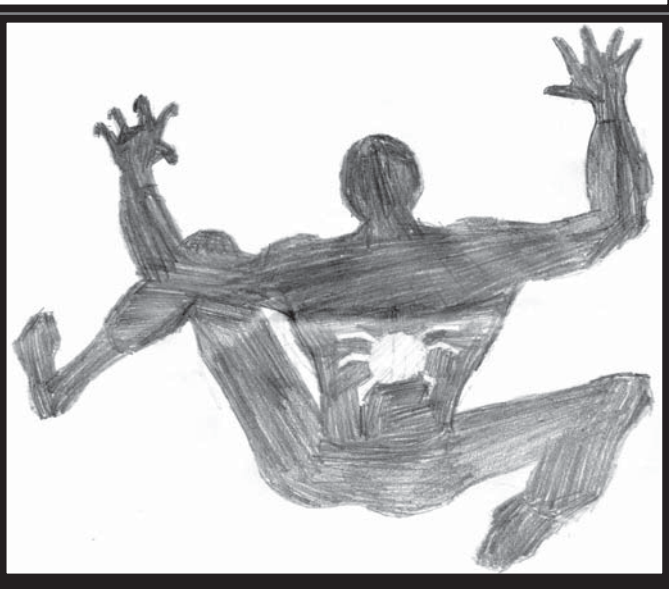
We RISE

As we live forever in GOD's eyes
Thank you...

WE RISE

Karma

Baby girl can't you see where your life is headed
(And I don't mean up)
Look around you locked in a dungeon
(Now you stuck and I bet it sucks)
I bet you there missing moma's loving.
While you crying at night 'cause things on your mind be buggin'.
I bet you be thinking you thuggin'
Well you should have thought about that
Before you thought you were grown
'Cause now you can't go home



Moma Always Said

Now you're out on the streets
Looking for a love you can't find
'Cause you feeling all alone
Forgetting that you have a baby at home
But you ain't tryin' to hear that though
You walk in the streets making money at last
When a man walk pass
And put a gun to your head
Saying is there anything you want to say before you be dead.
And in the back of your mind you can hear mom say...
Slow down baby 'cause you're moving too fast
You keep slippin' you got your foot on the gas
Can't you see baby I'm trying to make your childhood last
Slow down baby 'cause you moving too fast
But now it looks like you finally hit the grave at last.
Moma always told you
Slow down baby 'cause you're moving too fast
You keep slippin' you got your foot on the gas
Can't you see I'm trying to make your life last
Slow down baby 'cause you moving too fast
I'm trying to catch you
Before you hit the grave too fast
You want to grow up so fast
But you barely have a past
Moma trying to hold you to make your childhood last
But all you do is laugh
But in the back of ya' mind
You can hear moma say...
Slow down baby 'cause you're moving too fast
You keep slippin'
You got your foot on the gas
Can't you see I'm trying to make your life last
Slow down baby 'cause you moving so fast
I'm trying to catch you
Before you hit the grave too fast

LADY KAYOZ

This next writer is truly a treasure because without blaming everyone else for her actions she takes a look at her past in relationship to where she is now and has obviously learned a tremendous amount about herself in that time. When we constantly point the finger at others (which most of us do) we are pointing out problems we can't control and therefore have no real solutions to. The only time we can truly be productive in our growth is by looking at ourselves and seeing the mistakes we made since we can only control ourselves. We can't control what other people do... We thank her for being so mature in her thinking because all too often we get the opposite. Thank you for being a great example to the rest of us who are suffering from run ins with the law... Our role model writes us from the Estrella Jail in Phoenix, Arizona...

Hey Beat

What's chewing? Me, some pork rinds. Naw, just playing, but peep game though, I'm not the type to blame others for my mistakes in life. I mean I can say oh it's because my mother did drugs, or because my father didn't love me like he did my step sister, none of them made me take those swings at the creepers that tried to arrest me (they did as you can tell) but I can say that they have a lot to do with my anger and some things that I don't like about myself but I don't blame them for me being here.

I know it's hard for others to actually say I landed myself here or to say well my homie snitched on me no! If you were not doing anything wrong then there would not be anything to snitch on y'all feeling. But what I'm trying, no what I am saying is don't punk up and start crying for moma do yo' time, and get back out there and listen to y'all moma so you ain't gotta come back in here. Well I'm a let loose on y'all for now, holla back

Don't punk up and start crying for moma do yo' time, and get back out there and listen to y'all moma so you ain't gotta come back in here.

The Leaf

Let me tell you a story
Once there was a leaf
That has fallen
From a tree
The leaf has been
Stepped on by oh so many
Feet because the world
Could not see the beauty
Within this leaf
The leaf became rip
And got dirt from
People's shoe's that
Did not care for such
A leaf but one day
Around noon a man
Walking down the street
Stop and stared at the leaf
For he seen something
The world cannot see
He took the leaf home
And cleaned it from it's past
He put the leaf in a case
Made of glass the leaf
Has found a home at last
So now can you see
Look harder because
You'll see that the leaf
Was me...

SIR TURTLE ***We haven't heard from this next rapper/poet in a long minute. We kind of missed his raps filled with feelings of love and betrayal. As a matter of fact, we were beginning to worry about him. Well, here he is true to form with two raps to a woman he has very strong feelings for. He want her to 'let him know' what it's going to be because like most of us he's tired of being strung around like a puppet. Not too many people can muster up the courage to write a rap and get it published in The Beat when it's so filled with emotions such as love and compassion. But Sir Turtle does it time and time again making us come to the conclusion that he could care less what others think. He's going to get it off his chest the best way he knows how and that's to write. We can't knock him for that as he sits in a cell in Pleasant Valley State Prison in Coalinga, CA...***

Baby Let Me Know

Chorus (1):
Baby, just let me know what you want to do?
Because I just want to keep on loving you!

Verse (1):
Baby just let me know what you really want me to do
Because my mind and heart is already made up for you
I told you so many things in the past
But you told me that the words I say will never last
My love, my snow bunny every time I think of you
My lonely heart gets these crazy, crazy blues
Baby you got me daydreaming of you day and night
So my snow bunny let me know what you want me to do
And I'll make it completely right
I just want to keep on loving you!

Verse (2):
My snow bunny, I've given you so many things that you've asked for,
But everyday you keep asking me for more and more
Baby girl, tell me what you really want and need,
And by my heart I'll make sure it's a good deed
I used to make you laugh and smile like a clown
Because I remember that we had so many up's and down's
As I was looking up into your beautiful face
staring at you baby brown eyes
You're giving me that look that makes me wanna cry
Don't hurt my heart like you did before
With so many tears hitting the floor.

Repeat Chorus Two Times:

Verse (3):
You broke my heart in two
And even at that moment I knew that I would never stop loving you
My lovely snow bunny, I told you that I really do love you
But you tell in my face asking me if my words are true.
Baby girl, you bring me joy and laughter
Knowing that you keep me warm
You've always been there when I was in a storm
My lovely snow bunny let me know what I got to do
To make it again with you
Because baby girl you're my dream come true.
Baby girl, everything in my heart must be told,
Because my love for you is solid as gold
I could tell you all that you mean to me
But yet as putting my words into feelings isn't that simple you see
Because your friendship is one of God's miracles
A blessing beyond measure
I'll always cherish our relationship
Because your friendship is my only treasure
But you know what, my snow bunny, I just want to keep on loving you.

Shatter Dreams

Chorus Repeat Two Times:
This is what we call shatter dreams,
Dreams of a family that begins with one another
But in the end it gets shatter as it seems!

Verse (1):
You was always talking about marriage and love
As I was throwing your words away with a great big shove.
But I keep telling you that I'm not the one that likes to settle down
And I see on your sexy face you had this little sad frown.
Seeing all your tears running down your lovely cheeks
'Cause your speaking words of love
And it's the little things you say that gets me weak
Visions of you dressed in some sexy see through lace,
Gots me thinking back when I was kissing your beautiful face.

Repeat Chorus Two Times:

Verse (2):
We always talked about our dreams about you and I
Come on baby you know I hate to see you cry
'Cause when in times need I'll always be there
Just so you'll know that someone really cares
Many times when I held you in my strong embrace
'Cause I always knew that in our hearts we found that love and special place
I've always knew that I've been in your loving heart
But it was this crazy life that tore us apart
Heartaches and pain always seems so wrong
But the love and respect I'll always have for you will be strong
I think of you and the baby to describe my pain
But with your sweet loving words I know that I got to gain
This is what we call shatter dreams!

Repeat Chorus Two Times:

Verse (3):
I'm always out on the streets with my friends doing crimes
And I get busted and end up with 12 years in prison and now I'm doing my time
Being away from your loving warm embrace hurts my heart very bad
'Cause you were the best damn woman that I ever had.
Baby, now that I find myself all alone
Please consider only the good in me
And the fact that I've grown
When you broke my heart in two on the telephone
'Cause I knew for a fact that I would never go home
I tried to put my heartaches and pains in the past
But without you in my life I know I could never last
And this is what we call the shatter dreams!

Repeat Chorus Two Times:

Verse (4):
I can't make promises and I can say this much is true
I've remained the same person who has fallen in love with you
We always thought our dreams would become a reality
So that we would enjoy life full of luxuries
Baby girl, with all of the sweet qualities and love that I now understand had been simply divine,
Because my love, my soul, my life, my heart needs to know that you'll always be forever mine.
This is what we call shatter dreams!

Repeat Last Chorus Four Times:
This is what we call shatter dreams
Dreams of a family that begins with one another
But in the end it gets shatter as it seems

I Still Cry

Dear Dad

I still miss you, I'm 47 years old now and there are times when it feels as though it was yesterday when you died, I still cry. A lot has happened since that Christmas morning when mom called and told me, "Son, I'm so sorry, but your father has passed away." That was 26 years ago. I still cry.

I had 25 days left to do and you were going to pick me up, and we were going to have a place and just work and live, I remember dad the last time that I saw you alive, it was a couple days after I got the call about grandma, and how mom sounded on the phone when she said, "Son, I'm so sorry, but your grandmother is dying, the doctor said she has about two days," I still cry. When they let me go to see my grandma in the hospital, I couldn't believe my eyes; cancer had left her at 50 pounds before I went back that day, I saw you walkin' away, dad your pain still makes me cry. Divorced from mom, she had a new man name "Bill" your alcoholism still had you in its vice and not letting go of you seeing you losing grandma and your pride and you're hurt. I still cry when you died dad they let me go to your funeral you died 6 months after grandma did you know that dad? Grandpa was there his pain and my pain were so strong that God's own comfort could not console us, it took Uncle Ray, Uncle Curt, Curt JR, Gary, Bill and someone else to carry me out of the church. Dad I'm sorry but I fainted, I still cry.

I got out on January 15,1981, Dad Grandpa died in May of that year of a broken heart just like you, I lost all three of you 6 months of one another I so wanted to die, I still cry.

Since then Dad, Cliffy, signed with the Steelers! He was hit head on by a drunk driver and wrapped around a tree. He died the only boy of 6 kids! Grandma mom's mother and Grandpa Joe have died Aunt Judy, Uncle Vondell, and Uncle Ray all before 1989 I don't understand it Dad why am I still here? I still cry.

I'm now 47 Dad, I had gotten married, had a son name Michael Jack Rice after you, I found that my wife, was still married to someone name John and this thing called DNA says my son is not mine, I still cry. Mom married Bill, he's a swell man Dad and she's most happy, she's almost 70 now dad, and I'm back in prison as a third strike for cashing a stolen check, just to get a fix, I didn't become an alcoholic Dad, I became a drug addict. I didn't mean to dad. It just happened. I'm sorry grandma I'm sorry. Please don't cry.

All of us kids are still alive Dad. Linda is still in Santa Cruz and her husband left her. Anthony and Carlos Jr. both turned down contracts with the Angels and Rockies.

John and David are in Missouri, Butch is somewhere drinking it up on wife number three. Brenda is in Oregon. Dad it had to be then I'm glad that it is me in prison, I know it didn't have to be anyone. Dad I'm gonna close for now but my memories are of you all. I know God has not forgotten any of you nor will I. Take care Dad. Tell everybody hello for me, and I still cry.

JIMMY RICE ***Wow, what an incredible letter to us, and what an even better letter to a father that passed away. This next writer captures the essence of what it means to be locked up. For while life as we know it is halted by shackles and chains, the world still rotates and people are still moving at unimaginable speeds out here. One of the worst fears of being in jail is losing a loved one while in there. How about losing twelve family members in the course of ten years? If that isn't sad, we don't know what is. And if he isn't one the strongest individuals we've heard from, we don't know who is. He's older now, but like he brilliantly repeats to add effect to his piece, "He still cries." We love honest pieces like these so it's our utmost pleasure to give you Jimmy Rice writing from Solano State Prison in Vacaville, CA.***

I have seen me in so many of you, that it really touches me to read your pain, life is never fair, and nobody said it would be. We make our own decisions but we don't control the out come, many of you are on the same path I have been on for 30 years now, and you don't have to be!

My Name Is...

#20538-C#16222, 59557, T6054 I became a server used and abuser of methamphetamine AKA the devils potion and since 1976 I have 6 years clean on the streets. I have read many, many stories, poems, raps, etc in The Beat. I have seen me in so many of you, that it really touches me to read your pain, life is never fair, and nobody said it would be. We make our own decisions but we don't control the out come, many of you are on the same path I have been on for 30 years now, and you don't have to be!

People this is not cool, it's no fun and it's not the life that your folks wanted for you, I lost a total of 12 family members in 10 years it was like a domino effect there is nothing worse than going through a loss in the joint. I'm here because I failed, the system isn't set up for you to win that's where you must step up and beat the system by showing yourself as a productive member of society, they say it's a dog eat dog in here and every body is hungry for mutt, very few ever make it out to stay out its all in choices, slow down and don't trip on the other guys ride, be you. But first find you and contrary to what some folks say, there is a God and you're not him, keep it real and you'll be be just fine, and you are loved, don't be a number.

DEMETRI WILLIAMS ***Writing from the RJ Donovan Department of Corrections And Rehabilitation in San Diego, CA, we give to you a man who uses a whole lot of long words. Could this reflect his intelligence? Maybe... Maybe not... but when he says that it is wrong to ask others what one is not willing, nor ready to give, we can see that he is a great thinker. Challenging those who hypocritically see flaws in others that they have themselves, which isn't an easy task since most of us who are guilty of this won't admit it. But with his letter he suggests that we need to stop doing so because it's self-destructive. Keep on writing Demetri, people really need to hear what you have to say...***

To Whom So Ever This Might Concern:

My name is Demetri — Demetri Williams. I undertake to introduce this small note of inquiry for reasons that are quite complicated and inter connected. Foremost, I am writing to learn more about "The Beast Within." I was told, in vague and uncertain terms, that the focus was upon the youth — that articles and poems would be accepted, and perhaps, published if they were positive and preventive of criminal-drugs/alcohol-gang activity. If this is true, then, I have some very interesting lays to submit for consideration.

Secondly, I am writing in hopes of making the necessary connections (human and authentic connections) that might help to, in some meaningful way, anchor me against the violent waves of racist wiles and the selfish-dumb-disconcern that underline "southern California's human mis-relations." What I am here disclosing is quite powerful in that it is a call to consider the causes and not the effects behind the chronic drug/alcohol relapse and recidivistic rates of this dark age. In other words, I am hoping to get connected in a way that would go considerably beyond the impersonal exchange of noble thoughts and ideas. Indeed, it is all the same — if you can see it? Shallow analysis of critical issues shall fail, time and again, to arrive at tenable solutions because it does not delve down into the underlying cause from when comes the critical issues. Accordingly, lukewarm acceptance shall prove to be far more baffling and frustrating than outright rejection. Then, too, it is mine opinion that it is wrong (criminal, actually) to ask of others what one is not willing nor ready to give.

But, then, this is a dark age and the under dog must necessarily remain damnified by those who must necessarily lie in order to legitimize parasitic power. I inner stand. Even so, I can only hope and await a response. Thank you, though, for reading this small note of mine.

THE BEAT WITHOUT

E-MONEY ***On the one hand, we're pained to know that our one-time colleague here at The Beat, Eric Phillips, is back inside where he will reside for the next couple of years. But on the other hand, we've missed the contributions of this writer and poet — and thinker. For years, E-Money faithfully shared his wisdom with our Beat readers. Then he got out, worked with us for a minute, only to fall again. That is not a sin (unless you don't get up again...). So, it is with these mixed emotions that we proudly bring E-Money back to these pages. The first of these poems details the brutal reality of growing up in poverty in this rich land of ours... and we hope for more pieces like that. The other two poems show that love can smite you down wherever you are! And love brings hope... Eric is currently housed at 850 Bryant waiting for transfer to state prison...***

My success was through the cuts
and cracks of a project brick
oblivious to legit, being an outlaw my destiny's
signature was sealed with a death kiss.

This Is My Life

As far as I can remember back,
I've been facing one struggle after the next.
My whole life has been a series of struggles
while living under the illusion
that I'm going to one day find peace.
You can say I've been living in the clouds.
The sun haven't yet shined this way.
Years and years of societal abuse
make me wonder what's the use to pray.
I've been hurt so much that I no longer cry.
You can say this cruel world has raped away my emotions
leaving it stranded in the middle of nowhere, on a cold day
to die in the rain, prone to pain.
Life has been hard on these San Francisco streets.
It isn't as easy as standing on your own two feet
Two more of my friends just been gunned down and left to
die on this cold concrete.
It makes me wonder why God keep taking my friends away.
In a world where the sky can be so beautiful, the ocean so
clear and the sun so bright,
I must admit life up until now has been a hell of a day.
My memories is filled with pain and I can't shake this even
if I wanted to.
With my parents lost in a world of one addiction to the
next
My siblings and I have traveled from one project to the
next;
Forced to live in low-income housing where welfare is
common
and desperation lives in the minds of its victims.
My environment is contaminated with violence
and is filled with more police than some people whole
state.
Politics is fake,
more like a gang of dung-covered in cake.
Convincing society to chase an illusion created in a
scheme of lies,
promising you a caged safety,
but cant guarantee you the key to lock away it's pain.
You're interested in the story of my life?
It's not too far off from the violence that's going on over
there in Iraq.
Being black I stay under constant attack.
Buried in the thick of this drama up to my neck.
The constant noise of war was a hit in this era of crack.
Ratta tat tat... that's the sound of death.
You feel the fire in your chest?
Game over boy! Time to take that eternal rest.
My memories tell the stories of projects, black cats and
'hood rats.
There go I, five years old with starvation in his eyes
seen enough drama to give me an eternal cry.
"Ghetto Child" printed on my forehead.
Sixty pounds of flesh and already ready to take another
brother's breath.
The 'hood has taught me, it's life or death
prematurely kicked out of this bird's nest.
Four foot two, but big enough to hang with the rest.
Warrior carved across my heart
frontline soldier in the park.
Grown man in a kid body.
Never did I think years later It'll have me playing baseball
(3 strikes)
in the name of Polly... Class I attended but I ain't learn
shhh.
I was too busy accompanying dreams and schemes to get
rich.
Ghetto sick!
My success was through the cuts and cracks of a project
brick
oblivious to legit, being an outlaw my destiny's signature
was sealed with a death kiss. Closed minds blind to my
kind
don't judge me if you don't know how it is to live like this.
My heart been scarred so deep
that I can't even shake this nefarious pain in my sleep.
It makes me wonder if I'm still going to feel like this when
I'm six feet deep
off into this misery violently starving to taste free.
These visions of success sometimes seems as far fetched
as a blind man wishing to see Catch my remedy whether
you're friend or enemy
These words hold the medicine to heal the cuts and
wounds of infinity.
If you believe you can achieve.
Millions have been conceived from the womb of a brown
penny.
But nothing walks before it crawls.
It takes a wise man to know success lies in understanding
the ins and outs of a crooked law.
Incarcerated since juvenile hall.
You sometimes got to sacrifice in order not to fall.
Maturity has taught me this pain is God's call.
Society I hear your cries...
I wish I had the influence of the rain to wash them away,
the shine of the sun introducing you to a brighter day
but the wind that escapes from these lips only blow so far.
Often caught up in a hurricane
with my soul in desperate search of an umbrella to shake
this rain.
My life hasn't been under the luxury of a rainbow
but Mother Nature has been known to show me a rose or
two.
She do read bedtime stories to me of faith, every night pray
She has guaranteed me laughter occasionally and haven't
once forgot to wake the day
I hope I'm not sounding like I'm settling for less.
I'm just being appreciative towards that which I have; that's
the gift of life
So if you thought you were the only one feeling this pain
I thought I end this by saying: This is my life!

Special

The angels of all angels. The star that shines the brightest.
The adorable moon that gives light to such a dark world.
I must admit the sun don't have shhh on you.
And like a star, the world is infatuated with watching you.
For you are a hell of a sight.
And excuse my language, but your beauty will have a blind man enticed,
a Chinese divorce rice,
tongue all caught up in a twist of chop sticks
trying to find some new lips.
Damn girl, I wish I can give you a rose, a box of chocolates...
you know, the kind that says "Kiss."
Take you out on a dinner date
and read to you sweet poetry at a clear lake.
Tell you how special you are
while touring the city from the back seat of a luxury car.
I want to give you more than peace.
I want to give you a happiness that won't even fade
when you have reached your eternal sleep.
I want you to know how deep.
When someone special, my heart will beep.
Emergency 9-1-1 this feeling I have for you is from head to feet.
Surgical repair "chest deep"...
because of you I think my heart has missed a beep.
Damn! I'm dying for this love, at the same time trying to live.
Giving you life to see our love evolve in the seed of a kid.
Promise me my heart you will always keep.
Take care of it and hug it when you're asleep.
For my body has exited the building. It has jumped off the bridge falling for love's leap. Catch this bleeding jewel.
It's priceless. In this world it rules,
forecasting emotional news.
It'll rain on you and sing sweet tunes of blues.
The real root of sin — it's anybody win.
Welcome to the divides of heaven and hell,
where you either win or fail.
Never should you miss a beep
it'll have tears coming from a man that's six feet deep.
It's nothing to be played with.
It'll put you on death list living to get your pathetic life over with.
It's the cause of our existence.
Only a wise man will listen.
A fool is too busy running his mouth and bitchin'.
It's the place where feelings start...
What I'm saying girl is catch my heart...
Without you life wouldn't be living.
You are the rose that brings beauty to this field of pain and sinning.
You are the happiness in my day.
The love in my pray.
But don't think that I'm sprung girl, I just feel this way.
You make me want to do something special for you,
treat you like Cinderella. Girl try on the shoe.

I'm somewhere in her traffic listening to John Legend "Take It Slow"

Hypnotized by her cigarette smoke with every blow.

E-MONEY (CONT.)

It's just me and you
intoxicated in the heat of mother nature's nature night air,
sharing each other's body while I whisper this in your ear:
"On this beautiful God-given night I am touching an angel.
Pleasure has escaped me the direction of wind, so I hear my heart has missed a beat,
and my toes has curled into my feet.
My blood flow has ceased and my lungs forgot the pattern of how to breathe.
A blessing has found me after all these years of mental abdication.
Your feelings I will cherish girl, but it's either all or nothing.
I'm telling myself I should be waking up any moment now soaked in steam,
but the softness of your lips tell me this isn't just another wet dream.
Looking in your eyes as you lost in the mystery of the sky make me wonder have I died and went to heaven.
For the stars reflecting in your eyes show me the beauty in living.
You have come to save me from misery and pain.
Escaping that mentality to the domain of happiness — special place where men watch queens dress...
Girl, can't you see without you I'm lost?
I just wanted to say thank you for making me the boss.
You have helped me find the rainbow of love.
Girl just know it is always you I'll be thinking of.
I can honesty say the rain has stopped...
Love is the new kid n the block...
Here catch my heart!

My Everything

I really don't know if she know it yet, but she's my everything
Her love is like the lost and found
Sometimes I'm found, other times I'm lost, wondering how I get here.
But when I look at my road map and where I came from, it says I belong here.
And even though it's her world, I feel like a stranger taking a tour.
Visiting cities called attitudes, emotions and much more.
Am I a kid in her candy shop? Or am I a rancher jolly for her apple bottom lollipop?
Why is tears dropping from my eyes? Is it from the sweetness of her lemon drops.
That makes my clock abandon its tick tock...
Damn! This girl got me on lock.
How I'm go' break through her jawbreaker when it's harder than a rock?
And how I'm go' deny I ain't chocolate for Snickers whatchamacallit?
A cherry in between that Kit Kat.
This must be Christmas because I feel like a candy cane under a hat.
I really don't know if she know it yet, but she got me caught up.
I'm somewhere in her traffic listening to John Legend "Take It Slow"
Hypnotized by her cigarette smoke with every blow.
Playing in the softness of her hair thinking about how I never want to let her go.
I guess I can't get enough because her shyness makes me blush.
And I love the way she's confident when it's just us.
I hope she remain by my side past the duration of this ride.
You can say I fallen for love... Forget pride.
I can feel her looking in my eyes doing 85 mph in the middle of the night.
I know the speed limit says wrong, but I feel so right!

FRISKIE ***While this veteran Beat Without writer re-introduces herself in "READ THIS!" we want to add a little to that introduction. Friskie is a sweet young woman, a gifted writer and poet, and a person like so many of you trying to overcome the conditioning and experiences of her childhood, sometimes rising and sometimes falling. What we find so interesting about her warning to our readers to recognize that they are playing a rigged game they can only lose is that we were giving her the exact same warnings when she was working side-by-side with us, proving once again that knowing what to do when you are locked up is not the same as doing what you're supposed to do when you're free. That takes a particular kind of self-discipline and maturity — the kind that isn't taught inside these destructive institutions. The poems that follow make it clear that the writer herself is aware of this disconnect — and is wondering whether she can keep her commitment to change when she's done with the Y. For example, will the thought of meth continue to "absolutely repulse" her as she writes, or will she find the temptation to dip back into that killer drug too hard to resist when she can again make real choices in her life? Even with some of the mixed messages in these poems ("I'm all I need" in one poem, but "I'm still your lady... I need you back" in another; being "repulsed" by the thought of meth in one, but craving it in another), it sounds like maturity is finally coming to Friskie — but then, again, the true test lies ahead when she walks out of her CYA cell in Camarillo into freedom and has to live by the wisdom she shares here.***

Stuck In The System

Hey Beat, What's really good? This Friskie comin' at you live from CYA. Man, I'm getting more and more time every other month, it seems. I got 10 months worth of time-adds since I violated parole and came back in March this year. I was originally supposed to do 30 days. By the time I get out, I'll have done almost a year. At least in the pen you get a release date.

But I'm glad I'm a minor because then I can seal my record. I'm stuck in the system though. Been in and out of juvenile hall since I was 12. Two years later, I got committed to CYA. Got out at 16 and was only out for 6 weeks! I violated four days after being out. I was sort of going to school and working at The Beat. I'm supposed to go before the parole board again in January of '07.

But now I'm starting to wonder how long am I going to last this time? Will I be strong enough to actually make it on parole and not come back and violate again? I never thought I'd end up back in YA, and here I am again! I'm not worried about getting high no more 'cause the thought of meth absolutely repulses me now because I realize all the harm it's brought me and the pain it brought to those I love.

I'm worried about not being able to stay away from old people and places. I really want to go straight, but I feel a strong obligation to be there and help the people I love that are in messed up situations. But I know I'll get caught up in the crossfire trying to fix their problems. I'm a strong person – no doubt, but not strong enough to carry my burdens plus theirs. It'll break me. But if I don't, I'll have to live with the fact that I didn't do anything when I could've made a difference. I'm stuck in between doing what's right to them and what's right for me, but that's another story.

Much love, Beat, until next time, I'm still stuck in the system, even though my eyes are open and ears are ready to listen...

READ THIS!!

What it do Beat? I just read issue 11.37, and I'm gon' get at you real quick. I've been writing to The Beat for almost five years now. I worked at The Beat office after I got out of YA. But now I'm back in the Y doing an 11-month bid for a violation. Let me give some of you new writers a brief history of this writer so you'll know what's really if you don't already know.

I've been in and out of Hillcrest Juvenile Hall since I was 12 years old (San Mateo County). I got sentenced to CYA at 14. I paroled and was released from the Y January 23, 2006. I was arrested March 7, 2006, and brought back to CYA. Now I'm supposed to appear for a parole hearing in January, but staff are telling me I'm not getting out.

I may only be almost 17 years old, but damn, I read what all you youngstas be writing in The Beat and I get mad. Y'all is playin' a game that you can't win! I've done my share of dirt and I've done a lot that at the time I considered fun. But look where I'm at. My decisions got me stuck in CYA without a release date. You lost all control over your life. You see your parents livin' the life you live? If so, don't it hurt you? That's the way yo' mama feels when she worrying about all the things that could happen to you.

You ain't hard. You're being manipulated and you look dumb as hell. You say you want respect? Who's gonna respect someone that don't respect themselves or their family? You can't play the system, but the system will play you – guaranteed. I've learned the hard way. Now I'm paying the price. In the end it means absolutely nothing. You lose years of your life you can't get back. If it's worth paying that price then do what you do, but you ain't gonna be shhh doing that. And that's real.

I thought I was getting over, but life caught up with me.

Beat – much love and respect. You're like my family. Shout out to those in San Mateo County Hillcrest Juvenile Hall. Mervyn, Mike Kroll, David Inocencio, Ray Sanchez, Jr., Samuel Capers, much respect! Thank you all for helping to open my eyes and see my worth. Much love.

You lose years of your life you can't get back. If it's worth paying that price then do what you do, but you ain't gonna be shhh doing that. And that's real.

Intuition

My intuition tells me things I should know
I get that feeling and my sunny days turn to slush and snow
The more I grow the keener it gets
Now I'm unable to rest
All I can do is hope for the best
Write down how I feel
'Cause I need to get it off my chest
I can feel it, I want to cry
I'm praying that this time my intuition is telling me lies
Death is in the air and I'm not ready to say my good-byes
Something's wrong but I don't know what it is
I melt down in situations such as this
I'm about to lose all sanity that is left
Right now I want to be numb... if I were out I'd go smoke some meth
I want to be unable to think
I wish this gut-feeling would become extinct

Special K

Special K like the cereal
What's the deeleeo!
Solo bolo, sitting in my box
All doors locked
I'm kind of lonely
I wish someone could hold me
The way my mama did
When I was a little kid
I want to go home to my family
I got big plans for me
I'm gonna succeed
'Cause I'm all I need
I have faith in myself
Emotional wealth
I'm special 'cause I'm me
And I know on the inside I'm free

What I've Been And What I Am

I've overcome many obstacles in my short life: I've overcome rape; I've overcome my drug addiction; I've overcome loneliness; I've overcome pain; I've overcome prostitution; I've overcome the criminal lifestyle; I've overcome the despair that comes while locked behind brick walls and razor wire fences; I've overcome victimization.

I am a survivor. I am a daughter. I am a sister. I am a young woman. I am a miracle.

Through all the trauma and pain I've endured, I've come out that much stronger. I used to be fearless. Now my fears are high in number. I do not live in fear. I just value my life more than ever. I have a sense of self-worth, dignity and self-respect. I am an individual and my story is all my own. However, that doesn't make me different than anybody else. All people, regardless of race, sexual preference, age, disabilities, are equal. This country was founded on equality but has since strayed from what is stated in the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence.

People are people. We all have a story. We all have survived something. However, some of these survivors continue to allow themselves to be victimized over and over again. What sets me apart from others is I'm one of the survivors who chooses to share my story, my life, in hopes that I can show those who still suffer that there is a way out. And to be perfectly honest, it's all about personal choice. In everything we do, we have a choice. And if you are still feeling trapped, feeling hopeless, feeling shameful, feeling used, feeling neglected, feeling worthless, it's because you simply choose not to do anything about it.

These feelings won't stop and things won't get better unless you take action. Take control of your own life because this is the only life you'll live. Time is precious. We can't get it back. To make the choices to pick up your broken pieces, you have to want change. If you don't want it, if you don't desire anything more than what you emotionally have right now, things won't get better, and you won't move forward. It may be hard, but living in agony is harder, which is why so many people are dying because they are too reckless with their lives. I'm a survivor because I choose to be, not because of circumstances... just like I chose to be a victim and I chose to allow others to victimize me as well. You're not alone. There are so many resources and there is so much support out there. But a closed mouth don't get fed. Asking for help or voicing your pain is the first step to survival.

Fairytales

Don't forget about me and you
I'm still yours regardless of the things we went through
You were real to me
As sweet as can be
Now we're not together
But here I am still writing you letters
Hoping things will get better
My heart's homesick
And now I need you back
I'm tryna get my shhh together, my life back on track
I miss you baby
I'm still your lady
I'm yours to hold
In the summer's warmth and winter's cold
I'm yours; we gave ourselves to each other
I don't want another
We didn't use a rubber
And made ourselves a baby
But that wasn't meant to be
Obviously, it bothers me
I love you but I hate you
And in the end I made you
Fairytales don't come true

FRISKIE (CONT.)

Lesson Learned

Lesson learned
Sometimes we get burned
People take others' emotions for granted
Then we get fed up and leave 'em stranded
They blame us for not lovin' 'em right
After we cried over them every single night
It hurts more since you're always in my sight
Why do you like to fight?
Lesson learned
I got burned
The joke's on me
So I'm gonna leave you be
Well, have it your way
That way I know
You'll be okay

I'm a prisoner of the state
I'm a prisoner of pain
After years of being isolated
You start to go insane

Growing Through Concrete

Growing up behind bars and gates
Statistics say prison's our fate
A child trapped in a poisonous system
Spent years in a 5 x 9 cell 'cause I didn't want to listen
A youthful offender condemned to prison
My days are dark like the sun hasn't risen
I'm a beautiful young woman
That needs support and guidance
But growing up behind these walls
You learn nothing but violence
We commit a crime, we do tha time
But that's not going to solve the problem at hand
They're locking up children
And no one's taking a stand
I belong to the state until my time is served
By then I'll be 21, 7 years since I was sentenced
Can't you see this is absurd
Any hope we manage to hold onto eventually flies away like a bird
I'm a prisoner of the state
I'm a prisoner of pain
After years of being isolated
You start to go insane
The Department of Corrections is corrupt
Puts you in a cell that messes with your brain
So hard to maintain
I'm striving towards positive change
I'm sick and tired of being sick and tired
I know I'm gonna get burned if I keep playing with fire
I'm through with getting on one
Staying up hella wired
Like getting a job just to go and get fired
I'm better than all this, I deserve to feel bliss
I need to treasure my life, the way I do my first kiss
There's just so many things I don't want to miss
I'm gonna end this piece like this

CHRIS GRAJEDA ***We sort of knew when we published the 'criticism' piece by Mr. Reynolds earlier this year that our most loyal and respected Beat writers would respond in defense of The Beat and who more loyal and respected than our very talented friend, Chris Grajeda. And if anyone has the right to stand up for us, it's him, for he's seen all facets of The Beat. He was once a participant in our Alameda Juvenile Hall workshops, then he got out and became an intern in our office, and most recently he's been gracing the pages of The Beat Without as he went to the Youth Authority and then on to prison. We've followed this young man's life for a while now and even when he'd give us those 'rolling eye' looks when we'd talk about how destructive gang life can be, we knew he had an energy about him that would flourish whether it be positive or negative. Now that he's where he is, looking at his life retrospectively, we can tell some growth is taking place. First of all, his pieces are more mature, which is a relief to us. And secondly, he's more open minded to different ideas and ways of thinking. Regardless what's to come of him and his life, we know he'll always hold a special place in our hearts. And if he didn't know that by now, then we must say he's been 'warned'... He's writing from the Deuel Vocational Institution in Tracy, CA. Thank you for supporting us Chris... It's a pleasure to have someone of your caliber on our team...***

Beat's Defense

First, before I state anything let me commence this piece the most proper and productive way by extending to The Beat and faithful Beat readers my utmost love, care and respect full stride. I would also like to give my appreciation to the marvelous Beat and Beat facilitators for staying faithful to us each week and for all the positive feedback. I could only hope that why your consuming this piece that it has made it into the priceless pages of the beat in a state of clarity under the guidance of the most high honorable with that being said I could hop into this piece first hand...

Well as you know, it is I Chris Grajeda from San Leandro, CA, once again in these precious pages. I must say I was quite shocked the other night as I was sitting on my bed in Ironwood lockdown CYA. I got mail call and received my weekly Beat as always. I was flipping through the pages checking out the outstanding pieces of the week. I flipped through it a little more and ended up in The Beat Without, page 55 to be exact. I was totally disgusted and a slight bit offended with this piece Mr. Ernest Reynolds who resides in Tehachapi State Prison wrote to The Beat.

Well overall, me being me, I can't let this piece slide. I must respond to it and come to The Beat's defense. He had his own option which is only right (even though it was pure rubbish) so it it's only right to give my opinion. I recall this guy Mr. Reynolds stating The Beat was racist and inappropriate. He says The Beat is racist against "white" people. Ha, what was that some kind of joke? He really just don't know The Beat, huh! If he knew any better he would know half of The Beat facilitators are white or have some white within in them, I know this for a fact, for I worked in the very workshop that puts The Beats together. He must also not have knowledge that a grip of white people write for The Beat every week. He was talking about the world would not be what it is today if it was not for white people. Well, I find that statement slightly true for if it wasn't for the president (white person) we would not be in war over there in Iraq trying to invade and "steal oil" ooops... I mean trying to locate "weapons of mass destruction." If it was not for the president (a white person) we would not be losing innocent soldiers that are dying everyday.

I mean Mr. Reynolds is correct the world would not be the same if it was not for white people. But to be political about this situation the world would not be same without Blacks, Mexicans, Asians etc... look at Caesar Chavez, Malcom X, Martin Luther King the world would not be the same without them would they? Hey, the justice system was created by "white people" in which the system locked Mr. Reynolds' ass up... so what does that tell you Mr. Reynolds? Huh?

And as for this nonsense you said about The Beat giving negative feedback to the misguided youth. I don't know if Mr. Reynolds wears glasses but there is nothing negative about the feedback, perhaps he is reading it the wrong way, so Mr. Reynolds the feedback that The Beat gives us is the little piece that follows each Beat piece writin', I think you should open your eyes cause they're obviously deceiving you in some sort of way. "Negative feedback, was that a joke?" As for him saying "people put themselves in juvenile halls, CYA's and prisons," well I'm afraid he's right on that one in the most case but I recall him being in prison himself, so Mr. Reynolds I got news for you, you ain't no innocent angel that ain't got no wrong in you. Everybody falls short it is just the matter of how you get back up and do it again.

I got some news for Mr. Reynolds, if I had listened to The Beat five years ago I would not be here. If I had listen to The Beat three years ago I would not be here. The Beat always uplifted me and told me to be good, stay out of trouble, they actually cared. What Mr. Reynolds don't know is when I got out of jail I had no job. I was already a convicted felon at the age of 15-16. I had no place to make a little bit of pocket change except slanging or robbing, but hey look it here what do ya' say The Beat gave me a job! The Beat I say!

That is what Mr. Reynolds doesn't know he also don't know a lot of other things the wonderful Beat does. So for him to open his dirty ass mouth and speak about The Beat in such a way that is very disrespectful to me. I think it's disgusting I really do. Well this is my say so on the piece you wrote, for you had your option it is only right I have mines so with that being said I would like to apologize to The Beat "on your" behalf for being so disrespectful to them, I'm sure you just woke up on the wrong side of the bed that morning the day you wrote this.

So Beat keep up the good work, keep your guys heads up, and stay shaking them haters off. I don't care what nobody say about you I got mad love for y'all serio! Oh yeah, I almost forgot as for Mr. Reynolds declining to draw a picture for The Beat with a big "no"... Don't trip I got you Beat you know I got skills. I did covers for you before plus Mr. Reynolds might not know how to draw anyways... Lil' Chris Grajeda from San Leandro out ALRATOS !

Fight the good fight of faith and strive
towards eternal life:
Try to stay positive and push for what is right:
Stay prayed up on guard
never let your self get torn:
And now take heed and consider your self
warned!

Warned

I'm lost in complete darkness and mind went astray:
I try to rebuke the devil but he seems to never go away:
He tries to condemn my mind and take control of my every action:
But I praise God for my gift of reaction:

So I must warn you the devil roams the earth like a crazy beast:
Looking for weak hearted individuals, on their minds he will feast:
His ways are to steal, kill and destroy:
To try and use us as his demented little toys:

Fight the good fight of faith and strive towards eternal life:
Try to stay positive and push for what is right:
Stay prayed up on guard never let your self get torn:
And now take heed and consider your self warned!

My Confession

The Bible says that when you confess your sins you can be forgiven, for it is the change of your heart that expresses our guilt. All the things we have done, for selfishness has been achieved by greed, lust, deceit. We naturally are told in society that we can achieve greatness but when that greatness is taken what more do we have to seek. Lost is our goal of achievement and our souls feel betrayed. So betrayed that we feel the need to reach our intended greatness by any means even if it destroys what's around us.

So to confess would be to recognize the destruction we might have caused. Even though the bible says to confess with thy mouth I have reservations confessing to convicts. But what I know needs to be heard. I don't know why but I have been compelled to warn others of what happens or happened to me. We can all say that we know because we heard it before but that's ignorance. Just because you here it doesn't mean you know it.

So I write my confession to whoever reads it in hopes that they can see the pattern.

Sin has its paths but they're all the same. It's a pattern that we can see and read, especially in The Beat Within. Children betrayed reach out with guns/drugs/murder etc. The convicts in the grips of realization send warnings of examples and sagas of sorrows and regret. But it's the ones that have accepted and see what they've done who no longer want to be who they were.

The man wants to be a prince or a king and the king wants to be a common man.

I wanted to be a king — a man of great change. Limited by my arrogance and ignorance I walked in darkness with a dead soul trying to fulfill a desire that can never be satisfied. First it was lies then drugs and liquor and lust, theft, then as the pattern went on murder. I was a king in my own way. I'm so sorry for what I have destroyed and have shed myself of my old life. I confess my stupidity, my iniquity, and what I have done.

And I wait... day by day for a sign of forgiveness. I wait with a mind full of guilt waiting to be relieved of its weight. I take me still being alive as a chance. A chance to work towards my forgiveness no matter how long it takes.

I confess in the name of Jesus Christ and God of all creation, and I wait...

JEREMY TOWNER ***This next writer is quickly becoming one of our favorites. A while back he got a book published in installments over about seven issues and ever since then we've been elated to see his name on the return address. He's writing from Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, CA. And this week he shoots us a piece about confessing your sins and one that's titled, "Random Thoughts." He usually titles his pieces random thoughts and we can understand why. For though they are deep and brilliantly expressed, his thoughts are amazingly random. It's crazy how he can make his random thoughts so easy to understand. We know he'll be writing again, so be on the look out for him. For he has a whole lot of great things to say...***

What was begun must be finished. How else to complete our peace but to alleviate our fear?

Random Thoughts

It starts from a cauldron of fear. Rising ever higher in the heat of the moment bubbling forth to be relieved of it's supernatural force. Overwhelming it's container to believing the alleviation is to eliminate the predator. Trickery of our thoughts of insanity suddenly made clear as air that elimination can be justified. Our choice, our decision is made clear in the blind action of achievement. What was begun must be finished. How else to complete our peace but to alleviate our fear? How else to live but to eliminate the predators who strive to their own delusions that "it is what it has to be for me," thus is every man an enemy? With the world in the palm of our hands how can we be fools if we have knowledge of life?

In the end what is seen will be completed in an unstoppable force of the human will. We will destroy the predator out of fear. The predator will be ourselves.

WILLIAM HAMBY ***This next writer has been dropping poetry on us for awhile now, and we have to say this may be his best one yet. It'll make this issue of The Beat even better than it already is. He's basically showcasing his talents by speaking straight from the heart as if the paper is a person and his pencil the actual topic starter. We say that because he touches on many things he's thinking yet strings them all together in somewhat of a symphony of ideas. It's really a great piece sent to us from Pleasant Valley State Prison in Coalinga, CA, and we're waiting by our mailboxes to see his name on the return address once again...***

Dreaded Grace

I been sentenced to the envious of visions
The most intense non-sense that I live in
And exist. God bless this and all that I wish and all that I miss,
And the day I fall lifeless forgive the days I explode like rifles
I feel stifled no emotions left
I feel like the spirit of death
Feel the flames within myself,
This last breath
Injustice done too much they wish they struck us
In my dark soul they clutch us,
Desperation I feel I'm too deep for your FM station
All that we see will be replaced when the fire balls we all facing,
Heart racing terror struck they bury us forgive us.
Lord they making us murderers, misery kissing me,
All I seek is streets, this be deep
Like fathoms, still my mentality break atoms,
Molecules, intense rooted like follicles,
All I know is horrible, unloved this is the place I been shoved,
Now wonder why we facing these slugs, erasing these thugs,
Frowns displaced as they mug, smile as you lay on the rug,
Stuck, without love or trust, just more sorrow to touch,
Dreams I float off in the dust so often enough,
Nightmares it's a coffin I clutch
Some say save me, some say slay me
None can truly erase what I'm saying
Misplaced, I'm still praying,
God is great, the only one holding my fate
Those with hate want me to never awake
Wishing me blinded as I reside with snakes
Do they realize my soul cause quakes?
I never fold still most y'all shake
Un-believing a world of fake heathens
I'm the warlock of your block,
Destiny rich more powers than a witch
High priest I won't cease
Shine like nickel or chrome piece
The transparent, apparently this can't hold me
Without staring, one glance it's apparent
Many got no love from their parents,
They grew up wrong, scared of the truth in my song
Unprepared watch fools as they roam,
Drifting, ticket to hell they won't listen,
Need saviors or a mission, instead they given,
A prison sentence, visit us or the state ignorant?
Me or the government belligerent? Is death irrelevant?
I feel animals are more intelligent,
Even insects, got more respect, the whole earth in a wreck,
And the truly worse is just next,
Believe in yours, keep true even when the heart is sore,
Even though we sit behind hell's door.

BALA ***Writing from the Pelican Bay SHU in Crescent City, CA, we bring you a poet that will drop your jaws in awe once you read his creations. If you don't believe us, take a look at his latest. He starts us off with a letter to the younger generation (we love those). Then he goes on with five outstanding poems we think everyone should read. The first one is personifying someone as a butterfly and the last line reads, "So open your wings and fly." What a great way to end such an inspirational poem. His next four poems after that are hella powerful as he speaks about everything from time in Pelican Bay SHU to feeling like he's being forgotten. Evidently, we haven't forgotten him because he keeps hitting us with a spark that blazes our pages every time we publish him. We can't wait until he writes again... And after reading his latest installment, we're going to be waiting for the mailman 'til we see a letter from him again... Thanks for teaching us so effectively... We really appreciate it...***

Pelican Bay

My soul has felt the loneliness of an empty cell,
My ears have heard the gunner's blast
Like monsters out of hell,
My eyes have sent the postman greet a thousand other men
While the mail I been waiting for
Was withheld from me again,
If adversary breeds inner-strength,
You'll find that courage here.
When choices have all been removed
There is nothing left to fear
But I'm still the optimist, to progress one has to change
You must shift priorities and learn to rearrange
Keep on pushing forward, this party has just begun
Don't be disillusioned, it ain't over 'till it's done,
A gambler always rolls the dice,
No matter what the cost,
But those who know the price the best,
Are those who played and lost.
Just ask me or my neighbors our answers are sincere
The world is full of gamblers and most can be found here
Where one day melts into the next, and years go hand in hand
Where time and space just fade,
Here in Pelican Bay...

Life Sentence

My life, my ways, the struggle I face day by day,
I often wish I could close my eyes and drift away,
It seems like I'm stuck in a bad dream,
Broken hearted, from all I experienced and seen,
Still young and green,
Imagine a child locked in a prison scene,
Lost hope for what tomorrow may bring,
Paying his dues for staying true to the game
For respect, money and fame,
When in reality, all it gives is pain
It had him locked in a chain,
Time trying to ruin his brain,
Struggling to stay tamed
Can't stop the adrenaline from flowing through his veins
Unable to case his troubled mind
Just reminiscing, going back in time
Lost so many partners in crime,
Very few homies left
Sometime I feel like I'm taking my last breath,
And if I die
I often wonder if my family would cry,
I'm a hypnotized gangster with no comprehension.
A never ending cycle, another dimension,
Where life can only go in two different directions
Death or life sentence...

Forgotten

Cry me a raindrop, locked in a cell
What's next? I couldn't tell,
(Ride or Die) losing your family doing time,
People dropping dead, for driving blind,
But we all have the need for love,
As we crave a kiss or a hug,
Family got tired of waiting for this young buck,
In and out of the SHU, cruelty that will never ensue,
But you must ride or die,
Since you're not the only one doing time,
So get yours or be gotten,
Another soldier being forgotten,
(Ride or Die) cry me a raindrop from the sky,
Once again in the SHU doing mines
So I sit here letting my pen do the talking,
And when I start there is no stopping,
I write about death, about the world in a fence
(Institutionalized) there is no end,
People out there must comprehend
We are surrounded by deadly men
One wrong look, it can all end
Addict to the game, violence in my head
Who am I to blame? Let it out
Lay someone to rest, to die like the very best, nothing lost,
Just (Forgotten) in this game, there is no stopping,
Prison, it's always rocking...

(Butterfly) With All My Love

My little girl is all grown up. A beautiful butterfly out of its cocoon, spreading her wings wide open, she has something to prove,
I'm so proud of what she's done,
But the best is yet to come,
She will shine like the sun that she is.
Creating a good future, out of a bad influence,
Life has been hard for her as well.
But she's a strong soul and always prevail,
Everything she touches turns to gold,
Touched my heart, like no one has ever known,
I'm here for you, for the good or the bad,
Even if I wasn't there in the past,
For reasons out of my hands.
But somehow you have always understood this crazy man.
I love you my girl, and that you will always understand.
It's a hard life for you and me,
But together, we could get through anything.
We are and always be best friends,
And be there for each other. All the way 'till the end.
(This) our bond, not too many can comprehend.
But it's only for us to keep, to weep, to embrace,
A deep love, send from above with grace,
But I suffer a lot without you.
A torture with no end.
That at times I feel like I'm gonna bend.
But as I think of you are what we share,
There is nothing better to compare,
You are pure, and always in my heart,
A beautiful heart, a beautiful butterfly from the start.
There is no one better than you,
So spread your wings and start to see,
The world will always be at your feet.
Pick it up and raise it to the sky,
You're a wonderful creature.
(So open your wings and fly)

somehow you have always understood this crazy man.
I love you my girl, and that you will always understand.

Hypocrisy Of Glory

Atrocities of stories, hypocrisy of glory
Nevertheless, we kill each other
Becoming less and less
Human beings put to rest
Deprived like animals
Locked in a cage, animals full of rage
Clash of the titans, fear
Is always near
Nowhere to hide, nowhere to run
Scary tales not totally false
Many lives are being lost
You picture what you see on TV,
Much of it is reality,
The truth is many are losing their heads
Stressed out, full of fear,
Death is always so near,
Hanging from the ceiling, OH!! What a feeling
Sad sight, going from one to the next
But I'm still alive, much pride in my chest
You must have to survive,
Locked up for life, condemned to doing time,
Hypocrisy of Glory
Reality, this is a true story,
I'm Jaime Estrada, another hypocrisy of glory...

BALA (CONT.)

The Beat Within In Our Minds

What's up my little brothers and sisters, expressing my cariño as always. Hoping to catch you maintaining.

Dropping off some more insight, to a world of the glorification of gangsters, it's a trip how America is always been excited by the criminal life, have you ever thought about that? Al Capone, Scarface, Mobsters, por favor, how is our society going to do our youngsters better by teaching us how to develop into a rugged world of violence. I'm not a saint. I done many bad things. But it's been in my mind all my life. Now, I'm in too deep to pull out. But, think about it. Is this the life you want?

I wish I had someone who gave me a good insight growing up. It's too late for me. But my mission for repentance is to enlighten you with some useful insight. If you don't wanna follow through and still act tough, well I assure you, you ain't tough enough, all you're doing is messing up your life like me. So glorify this. Life could go in two different directions — death or a life sentence. Welcome to the gangsters life. Anyhow, even a gangster needs love. Without it, you're just nobody, I wanna let you see the other side of me with this peace, Butterfly, there is one in all of you. Enjoy. See you next time. I got my eyes on you

BONES ***We don't know what it is, but this issue's BWO section is filled with poems dealing with love and how much people are excited or discouraged by it. There must be a lot of heart breakers out in the world today. This next writer is tired of his girl's 'excuses' and is letting her know that the best way he can in his current situation — by writing. We think whoever this is dedicated to needs to read it, so we hope this issue will get into her hands somehow, someway... He's writing from Frackville State Prison in Frackville, Pennsylvania. And in his letter he says he's doing seven and a half to twenty years. Well, if you want, you can continue to use The Beat as your platform. At least until you get out. We'll give you something to do and that's teach***

Excuses

Always lookin' for myself in all the people I see,
I wonder what they're seein' when they're lookin back at me.
I'll tell you that I hate you. But you know that's just a lie.
You know I don't mean it cause I'm the one you despise.
I've got to do something and I've got to do it now.
I've got to get to something. But I really don't know how.
It's hard to get by, it's hard to get through.
It's hard to hear me, when I'm trying to talk to you.
You see these hard eyes, you know what I mean.
These eyes got so hard from everything they've seen.
I am that hard man, so hard for you to find.
I am that hard man with an iron mind.
You turned me in and burned me out.
You pulled me in and locked me out.
You ripped your feelings across my back and didn't see me bleeding.
You turned away when I spoke and left when I was in needing.
I've got my arms around myself
While you got yours wrapped around someone else.
I didn't want this pain but got it anyway.
I tried like hell to stop it, but it won't go away.
I hate to say I miss you, even though it's true.
I hate myself for the fact, I really long to kiss you.
I wrack my brain tryin' to remember anything I did to you.
I wrack my brain, try to dismember any part still attached to you.
I'm sorry I still feel all this pain inside,
But it's like a scar across my face, I cant seem to hide.
I used to always look at you, like you was on a throne.
But now its time I realize, I'm better off alone.
It hurts so much, you have nothing to say.
But it hurts even worse, you can just walk away
I tried to talk to you one day but you simply had nothing to say.
I tried to touch you the same day but all you did was slap me away
How could you say you loved me, when my heart has so many bruises.
You must have really hated me, to make up so many excuses...

I'm sorry I still feel all this pain inside,
But it's like a scar across my face,
I cant seem to hide.
I used to always look at you,
like you was on a throne.
But now its time I realize, I'm better off alone.

DONSHAY ***They say it's better to have loved and lost than to have never loved at all. But when you're on the verge of losing the one you love that saying can almost feel like it doesn't apply to you. Normally we don't really enjoy love poems because we know that when in there it's real easy to love someone being that we're free from a lot of the temptation we had out here. But we like this one because he's speaking straight from the heart without sugar coating anything. This hopeful romantic writes us from Mesa, Arizona...***

Hole In My Heart

Baby you burned a hole in my heart
I really thought that nothing could tear us apart
Baby I gave you all my love
When you left me you're all I could think of.

I know I did you wrong
But I never thought you'll be gone for so long
You left with no remorse
I don't know why but I tried to get you back by force.

I'm sorry baby take me back
I'll be a better man and that's a fact
Just give me one more try
And we can fly together and let our love pass by

Dreams I float off in the dust so often enough,
Nightmares it's a coffin I clutch
Some say save me, some say slay me
None can truly erase what I'm saying

check out the rest of William Hamby's BWO piece on page 49